



EMORY UNIVERSITY

# Department of African American Studies

Emory College of Arts and Sciences

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## This issue spotlights

two retiring faculty members, Nagueyalti Warren and Leroy Davis, both of whom, in singular ways, have made monumental contributions to the department we are today and the rich history we enjoy.

It also highlights alumna Jacinta Saffold, who has gone on to complete her PhD in African American literature and black feminism at University of Massachusetts–Amherst and who speaks for many alumni when she says that AAS groomed her “to cross boundaries habitually.”

We welcome two new faculty members, Andrew W. Mellon Professor in the Humanities Valerie Babb and Asa Griggs Candler Professor and Provost Dwight A. McBride.

Enjoy reading about the recipient of the inaugural Rudolph P. Byrd Scholarship, Monet Timmons. The scholarship supports an Emory College student who demonstrates leadership activities that address social, political, cultural, and professional issues in the African American community at Emory.



In fall 2017, we welcomed our new director of undergraduate studies (DUS), Michelle Y. Gordon.

Says Gordon, “I am honored to take on a role that contributes to the institutional development of African American Studies (AAS) at Emory and in Atlanta. It is my hope that I will be able to help grow our major, support and challenge our students to dream big and be their very best selves, strengthen our honors program, and continue making AAS an integral part of the Emory community and the wider world of black studies in this city. In my capacity as DUS, I hope to carry on the work of those who have helped to build this department and to make my own mentors proud.”

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# Passing the torch: Reflections on a remarkable career

After 30 years of being part of the Emory community, Nagueyalti Warren, professor of pedagogy, recalls what led her to Emory, her most memorable moments, and her plans after retirement. Best of all, she shares words of wisdom for future generations.

Warren began her career as assistant dean in what is known now as the Office of Undergraduate Education. As such, she enjoyed the relationships that she fostered with students and coworkers alike. She fondly recalls hearing the late Peter Dowell's laugh float through the hallways of the buildings, indicating that his presence always kept the job interesting and fun. She also developed a friendship and professional partnership with Sally Wolff-King, who was also assistant dean at the time. Their collaboration led to the coedited volume *Southern Mothers: Fact and Fictions in Southern Women's Writing*. Assisting Emory students, though, is what brought Warren the most satisfaction.



Nagueyalti Warren,  
Professor of Pedagogy,  
African American Studies

Warren and Vera Rorie—former assistant dean and director of the Office of Multicultural Programs and Services—developed the Minority Mentoring program to assist minority students on academic probation. The program paired the student with a faculty member who would assist with time management, goal setting, tutoring, and the like. Students initially resisted the program, feeling as though they were being called out for their academic performance; however, Warren was not deterred and continued to build the program. By 1996, the program had proven so useful that all students wanted to participate, and the college opted to incorporate the faculty mentoring program into its portfolio.

## The road to African American Studies

Following completion of her undergraduate degree, Warren applied to the graduate program in English at Boston University. To her dismay, she did not gain acceptance and decided to write a letter to the department to express her displeasure. In the meantime, she was admitted to the graduate program in English at Simmons College. Shortly after being admitted at Simmons, Warren received a phone call from Samuel Washington Allen of Boston University's English department.

Allen was not calling to discuss her application to the English department but instead wanted to tell her about a new program called Afro-American Studies. The program was only accepting seven students, and Allen believed it would be beneficial for Warren to apply. She did and was accepted to the master's program in Afro-American Studies. It later occurred to Warren that she was now enrolled at two different schools at the same time. She never notified either school of her dual enrollment, and while she claims it "nearly killed" her, she was able to complete them both successfully. Being in both programs also allowed her to stay focused on her career track of African American literature.

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## On a roll

Meeting the daughter of Desmond Tutu, Theresa Thandeka Tutu, is one of Warren's greatest moments at Emory. That meeting sparked a lasting friendship between the two women, so much so that Warren stayed at the home of Desmond Tutu when she visited South Africa.

There were many funny moments during the years, but the one that stands out happened on graduation day—spring 1989. During that time, it was traditional for members of Warren's office to spend Mother's Day weekend rolling the diplomas for graduation. The ceremony was held at Woodruff PE Center, and all of the diplomas were placed on a table on the stage. As students' names were called, Warren and Wolff-King would hand out the diplomas. Some of the students were nude under their gowns and some were intoxicated. One student came up and bumped the table, which caused all the diplomas to roll off. Needless to say, from that moment forward, students did not receive their correct diploma, which of course added to the chaos. Thankfully, that never happened again.

## Making her peace with Emory

Suspend judgment: that is one of the valuable lessons Warren learned while being here. When she came to Emory, she did not believe that she would stay long, believing the environment was not friendly. People did not greet one another, and she started to believe that Emory was, in her words, a "hostile environment." While not everyone was friendly, she did eventually meet people who were welcoming and supportive, which made her realize the importance of suspending judgment.

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## *Words of Wisdom*

- Be sure to vote!
- Become as educated as possible. Don't allow anti-intellectuals to denigrate what you know to be valuable—like your education.
- Recognize that all you receive is not just for your personal enhancement or enrichment but places on you the obligation to give back. The National Association of Colored Women's motto was "Lifting as We Climb," and it should be heeded today, for it encourages a sense of noblesse oblige. The more opportunities one receives, the more obligations one has to help others. Instead of a sense of entitlement, develop a sense of social responsibility. People tend to get confused and focus on "I." If we lose the focus of unity—that we are all in this together—it becomes chaotic like it is now.

## Love and misses

Warren is grateful that she is part of a profession that allows her to do what she loves: read and then share and discuss what she has read with others. She believes that what a student reads and studies will influence how he or she sees the world. To watch students come in as young as 17 years old and blossom into young professionals has been rewarding.

She will miss being in the classroom and interacting with students. Similarly, she will miss listening to their ideas and opinions and noting how they have differed during the past three decades.



### Buoyed by Books

Warren's favorites?  
*The Color Purple*,  
by Alice Walker

*Half of a Yellow Sun*,  
by Chimamanda Ngozi  
Adichie

*The Poisonwood Bible*,  
by Barbara Kingsolver

Name a book that you believe every major/minor should read:  
All AAS majors and minors should read *The Souls of Black Folk*, by W.E.B. Du Bois. According to Warren, "the book provides a critique of the African American experience in 1903 that is still relevant today."

### And now . . .

Warren will finish her Alice Walker book, write, and travel. With regard to the latter, it is quite an itinerary: she will go to Mexico to see the ruins, take in the Pacific side of South America, and visit Nova Scotia, for she is interested in the history of black people escaping slavery to go there. She also plans to visit the Philippines, Alaska, and Antarctica. Her travels to Emory will remain frequent, in that she plans on extensively utilizing the Stuart A Rose Library.

American Pie  
by Nagueyalti Warren

I'm seven in the porch swing  
looking up at a periwinkle sky-  
tiny cotton-wool clouds  
floating so like a turtle  
I can see how the world turns-  
It's not fast, but slower than the butterfly's  
wing fanning our honeysuckle bush.  
I'm in shorts, halter-top, blue tennis,  
daydreaming I'm a movie star,  
when four boys on Schwinn Stingray bikes  
pedal past our wide front porch.

I smile and wave, they yell,  
"nigger bitch!"  
fast riding down the street.

# For an ambitious scholar, Emory fit the bill

Leroy Davis, associate professor of African American Studies and History, will retire at the end of the academic year after being on sabbatical this current year. Davis was an integral part of the creation of the department and will be sorely missed by students and colleagues.

## Didn't fit the mold

In reflecting on his time in academia, Davis recalls that he was very much a nontraditional student and faculty member, beginning his postsecondary education via the GI Bill after serving in the military. Davis then taught at Kennesaw State University and the Atlanta University Center for several years before coming to Emory.



Leroy Davis,  
Associate Professor,  
African American Studies  
and History

Davis's mentor during his PhD program in the Pan-African Studies department at Kent State University enhanced his understanding of African American Studies as a discipline. That exposure combined with his experiences working at historically black colleges. Morehouse and Spelman had a positive impact on his thinking about African American Studies before Emory. Davis joined the Emory faculty in 1991 after feeling that being at a research institution would help him achieve his professional goals. In all of his positions at various universities, he says, "What remained pretty constant for me was my interest in working with black students."

## Generational adjustments

Davis had to make some adjustments when he came to Emory. "Certainly at Kennesaw, this was a time when there were still a large number of older students like myself, including Vietnam veterans and others from the same generation who decided to continue their education after years of full-time work. In addition to 18- to 24-year-olds, the older Kennesaw students were a significant part of my student model. I can remember in those early days that I would say to the students at Emory, 'Oh well, you remember this happened in the late 60s or the early 70s,' and I would get these stares because they were like, 'What's he talking about?' I could say that at Kennesaw and even to some extent in the early 80s at Morehouse. I quickly learned that familiarity with that time period did not work at Emory for students born in the late 60s and early 70s. So, there were adjustments that I really had to make when I came to Emory."

Rudolph Byrd came to Emory in the same year as Davis—1991. Byrd was the Goodrich C. White Professor of American Studies and served as the director of the Department of African American Studies for many years. When Byrd and Davis joined the faculty, African American Studies was a program, not yet a department.

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## A shared vision for AAS

Davis notes that Byrd was very much involved in a number of different ways in the Emory community, and community involvement was a major part of the African American Studies program. Of Byrd, Davis says, “We had the same vision in terms of what an African American Studies department was.” Davis recalls that this was a time when the National Black Arts Festival in Atlanta was “really a big thing,” and the department was a major component of it.

Davis notes that the community involvement of the department “fit very well into my expectations of what an AAS department was all about. That’s what I remember in those very early years, the interaction that often took place between the metro Atlanta community and AAS at Emory. And, certainly, Delores Aldridge had laid the foundation for that. There were several people that she had hired part-time even before I got there who taught classes at the Atlanta University Center.” Aldridge is the Grace Towns Hamilton Professor of Sociology and African American Studies Emeritus. She became the founding director of the program in 1971 and administered it until 1990.

While Davis held a joint appointment with the history department and AAS (“and the history department treated me very, very well,” he notes), he says, “certainly, I felt my major interest was in the goals of an AAS department with its emphasis on academic excellence and social responsibility.” As time went on, Davis says, “We [AAS] were kind of victims of our own success.”

## Evolving to fit a changing student population

Black students always had the freedom to major in any field of their choosing; however, there were still limited job opportunities for them. Davis says, “I saw this bubble, in many ways, burst over time as a result of expanded job opportunities.” Consequently, AAS course enrollments plummeted as major fields demanded more concentration, and Emory began to expand its student populations. “It’s difficult,” says

*“That’s what I remember in those very early years. The interaction that often took place between the metro Atlanta community and AAS at Emory. And, certainly, Delores Aldridge had laid the foundation for that.”*

Davis, “to look at expanded job opportunities in a negative way, but we had to make adjustments to the new kind of populations that were coming onto Emory’s campus, and that was not always an easy thing to do. There had to be adjustments in how we taught our classes; some of our students were not as interested, I think, in some of the community components as they had been before.”

Davis continues, “This is a different generation, and one of the things I really like about the students is their emphasis, regardless of major, on activities that have to do with social responsibility,” Davis says.

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“Talking about millennials, regardless of all the things that people tend to say that may be negative about that generation, I think one of the things they do have, no matter what their interests are professionally, is a sense of social responsibility. I think that’s very important to them.”

Davis acknowledged that other kinds of life experiences come to the forefront, and social responsibility can become less important as students graduate and move through adulthood. According to Davis, “You always want to keep this little part of you that has this sense of social responsibility. Doesn’t mean you spend all your life doing it or anything like that as a career, but there’s a way of thinking about giving back that you never forget about, you see.”

## Time well spent

Two experiences at Emory, both having to do with community functions, have been foundational for him. One opportunity was working with the Red Cross during the Hurricane Katrina catastrophe. “One of my best friends lost everything in New Orleans—we taught together at Spelman—and I just felt that it was something I needed to do, to be as much a part of trying to help the situation any way I could,” he says. “I taught my classes, kept up with all of that, but almost every day I went to the local Red Cross and registered a lot of people coming in, helped them get settled here in the Atlanta area. I enjoyed it so much, I would do it on Saturdays and Sundays. It’s just one of those things that a life in academia, and certainly at Emory, allowed me to do. I’ll never forget that and I’ll always be very grateful for that.”

“Another thing we did, and Emory was very supportive of it, is there were some major photographs that came up on lynching. These were photographs that were shared throughout the South, really throughout the country, of people being lynched. Thee Smith [associate professor of religion and associated faculty in AAS] and Randall Burkett [curator of African American Collections, Rose Library] were a part of this.”

Davis and others took part in a major conference at the Auburn Avenue Research Library in 2000, allowing the community to air their views about Emory getting the photographs. Davis remembers it as a hostile environment, one in which people couldn’t understand the university’s interest in the materials. Notes Davis, “Thee and myself and several others had to explain to them why they were important to have so that we could always remember.” Davis recalls that Emory supported their position fully. For more about the lynching photographs referenced here, see <http://cnn.it/2Bu8FTQ>.



Jean Bergmark and her husband with Leroy Davis. Bergmark was the author of *Grace Towns Hamilton and the Politics of Southern Change*.

Davis recalls that his participation in the hurricane relief efforts and the community conversations about the photographs “are just two of the things that really stand out to me in terms of the way that Emory was fully supportive of that community component in terms of what Emory is all about.”

# Celebrating our MMUF fellows

Kristin McFadden and Sariah Benoit are both Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellows (MMUF) who will graduate in May 2018 as AAS majors.

## What makes McFadden tick

McFadden is also an anthropology major, and her research is focused on Gullah communities in South Carolina. She spent summer 2017 conducting research and interning at the Penn Center in St. Helena Island, South Carolina, where she gained valuable knowledge about curating historical and artistic exhibits. In MMUF, McFadden is privileged to have two faculty mentors. Vanessa Siddle Walker (Samuel Candler Dobbs Professor of African American Studies) is able to work with her on her literature review, while Alicia DeNicola (associate professor of anthropology at Oxford College) assists her with anthropological theory.

McFadden came to Emory's Atlanta campus from the Oxford campus, where she was an Oxford Research Scholar (<https://oxford.emory.edu/academics/student-research.html>). While at Oxford, she was a member of the Voices of Praise Gospel Choir and Interfaith Council as well as a Peer Assistance Leader. Additionally, she participated in theory-practice service learning with the PATH Project, where she worked with children in an after-school program. On the Atlanta campus, McFadden is a member

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An Oxford continuee and now senior, McFadden is an AAS/anthropology major whose research focuses on Gullah communities in South Carolina.



Kristen McFadden

Benoit anticipates applying to PhD programs after taking a gap year. During that time, she hopes to do something that connects history and art, or perhaps teach.



Sariah Benoit



of the NAACP chapter and the Black Student Alliance. She also works as a tutor in the Writing Center and recently had the opportunity to assist a student in one of Michelle Y. Gordon's AAS classes.

"I thought I was pre-med when I came to college—I was interested in black women's health and breast cancer and things like that. So I thought I was an anthro and human bio major, but it just didn't really fit," McFadden says. During her sophomore year, she realized that she really wanted to research, but she didn't feel that her research mixed very well with the practice piece she would be required to do as a doctor. She was more interested in "broader questions of access." "I was working with [Alicia] DeNicola as an Oxford College Research Scholar," she recalls. "She was like, 'Have you thought about this program [MMUF]?' At that point, I was undecided about what I wanted to do, but then I got more serious about just doing research."



Kristin McFadden at the MMUF Annual Research Conference in April 2017

McFadden's interest in African American Studies began at the UNCF/Mellon summer institute. (See <http://bit.ly/2kgtr1E>.) "I remember being in the space,... and everybody's project was personal to them, and I didn't feel like mine was personal to me. When I got Mellon, I felt like I had to prove I was doing good research, and at that time I didn't understand how anthropologists could do good research that wasn't outward. So at the summer institute, I said, 'This [African American studies] is something that I want to do.' "

*In Dianne Stewart's Black Love class, "I became very intrigued with how interdisciplinary African American Studies is and how relevant and pertinent it is to my interests and academic and professional goals."*

In the semester after the summer institute, McFadden took Dianne Stewart's Black Love class, which she says inspired her to major in AAS. "I became very intrigued with how interdisciplinary African American Studies is and how relevant and pertinent it was to my interests and academic and professional goals," she recalls. "I just loved that class," McFadden goes on, "and I'd go to my other classes and be bored. It was more so that I wanted a blending of the two: I wanted be in an anthropology class that talked about African Americans and vice versa, and it just wasn't happening. So I just decided I was going to be an AAS minor and then changed from a minor to a major. So AAS is a nice blend of things I was already thinking about."

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## What makes Benoit tick

Sariyah Benoit credits Carol Anderson with “making her” apply to MMUF. “I came into college thinking I was a math and sociology [major], and then I was like, ‘Maybe I can do B-School and make some money.’ But then I took financial accounting and got a C and Anderson said, ‘What are you doing?’ She just really encouraged me to apply for MMUF. She thought I was getting distracted trying to do other things.” Benoit had taken a freshman seminar with Anderson on black athletes in America, as well as Anderson’s Civil Rights Movement course.

She was drawn to major in African American Studies during her first semester at Emory. “I took the intro class with [Pellom] McDaniels—his enthusiasm and the content in the course captured what I wanted from sociology and realized I wouldn’t get from sociology. So that attracted me, definitely.”

*In her classes, Benoit says, “there was a lot of outward, very clear, pushing back and challenging . . . And that’s a lot of what we get from Mellon.”*

Benoit has worked as an intern for the Emory Black Student Union (EBSU) since her sophomore year. She began doing outreach and external affairs and gained experience helping other organizations communicate with each other. During her junior year, she was the historian and Caucus of Emory Black Alumni liaison, during which time she attended their meetings and took minutes. She also worked in the Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Books Library doing archival work. She is currently the senior staff administrator for the EBSU.

Benoit and McFadden recall that certain classes and faculty members helped prepare them for MMUF. As an Oxford student, McFadden took Patricia Del Ray’s Gender, Race, Class, and Sexuality course. McFadden notes that the way Del Ray “was speaking about African American anthropology and sociology and history” allowed her to begin thinking about the merits of interdisciplinary fields like African American Studies. She also credits Molly McGehee for helping her frame her MMUF application. McFadden took McGehee’s African American Literature Since 1900 course at Oxford.

Benoit says her AAS classes prepared her to apply for MMUF, but Leroy Davis truly prepared her for life as a fellow. Benoit took Davis’s Black Power in Africa and the African Diaspora class during her sophomore year. He had very high expectations for her and provided her with a lot of constructive criticism. In each class, there was “a lot of outward, very clear, pushing back and challenging in the classroom. And that’s a lot of what we get from Mellon—a lot of challenging and trying to constantly better yourself.” Benoit’s AAS classes helped her improve her writing, and she says that Davis’s class helped improve her critical thinking skills when she was constructing an argument in the classroom. Davis would consistently talk about the evidence students were providing and push them to be better scholars. In addition to his other roles at Emory, Davis has served as a director of the UNCF/Mellon summer

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institute at Emory for many years. McFadden corroborates Benoit's recollections, saying, "I remember in the summer institute, [Davis] was always saying, 'Explain yourself. Why are you saying this?'"

Benoit has been awarded Emory's Fox Center for Humanistic Inquiry's Humanities Honors Fellowship. In conjunction with the Emory College Honors Program, the fellowship guarantees support for the next semester in completing a project.

McFadden plans to take a "gap year" before applying to PhD programs in anthropology or African American studies. She is looking for jobs in the nonprofit sector, particularly in social and political activism or development. She feels the field is one that would combine her research skills and interests.

Benoit is also applying for jobs this semester for after graduation. She hopes to do something that connects history and art or perhaps teach for a year before she goes on to pursue her PhD. She feels that MMUF and AAS have been good practice for teaching, as teachers have to "explain themselves." Instead of returning to her home state of New York, she likely will remain in Atlanta for the year.



## New Summer 2018 Course Taught by Kimberly Wallace-Sanders

### *Southern Traditions: Flags and Monuments*

Sweet tea, fried chicken, BBQ, Sunday church, magnolia trees, pickup trucks, Confederate flags and monuments. This course explores the meaning and implication of "Southern traditions" and how they are connected to race. Using literature and film, we will consider the contemporary debate about flags and monuments; is Southern culture and tradition under attack? What assumptions are made about Southern tradition with regard to race?

# Welcome to our newest core faculty member

Valerie Babb is the Andrew W. Mellon Professor of African American Studies and English at Emory University. She received her PhD and MA from the University at Buffalo, State University of New York, her BA at Queens College, City University of New York. She has been a professor at University of Georgia and Georgetown University.

Her research interests include African American literature and culture, as well as the way race impacts the United States and global society. Babb explores culture through the mediums of film, art, and music. She focuses on how academic study can be translated to bettering communities.

There is so much African American history in Atlanta, which is why she looks forward to visiting the King Library, Auburn Avenue, and the Atlanta University Center. She also wants to build relationships within Emory and the surrounding local communities.

In the spring, she will be teaching AAS 385: African American Literature and Culture. She's excited to teach this course to a broad range of students and facilitate discussion of African American novels and elements of American popular culture. Babb believes that black culture is so expansive that many people from diverse backgrounds engage with it even if they are not aware of doing so.



Valerie Babb,  
Andrew W. Mellon  
Professor of African  
American Studies  
and English

## *Getting to know you*

*Who is your favorite author?*

Ralph Ellison  
Claudia Rankine  
Herman Melville

I chose those three because there is a certain timeliness of vision and smart, witty humor in Ellison that very few authors have been able to accomplish. Rankine, author of *Citizen: An American Lyric*, sees America so clearly and expresses it so beautifully. As for Melville, he remind us that no matter when they worked, good writers always have forward-looking visions that continue to teach us.

*What is your favorite book and/or novel?*

I can't name a favorite, but right now I am reading *Homegoing* by Yaa Gyasi and *Manhattan Beach* by Jennifer Egan, just for fun.

*What would you like the Emory community to know about you?*

I think of myself as an activist academic. I am not here just to read, write, and study but to make everything that I am teaching and researching a benefit to the larger community.

# *New provost and one of our own*



Dwight A. McBride, Provost and Executive Vice President of Academic Affairs and Professor of African American Studies

Dwight A. McBride serves as provost and executive vice president of academic affairs and professor of African American Studies.

McBride came to Emory in July 2017 from Northwestern University, where he served as dean of the graduate school and associate provost for graduate education, as well as the Daniel Hale Williams Professor of African American Studies, English, and Performance Studies.

During his time as dean and associate provost, the graduate school made unprecedented progress in diversifying Northwestern's PhD programs, oversaw a major increase to the base stipend rate and other forms of financial and academic support for PhD and MFA students, expanded professional development offerings for graduate students and postdoctoral fellows, and created the Office for Academic Affairs in the graduate school, which is responsible for maintaining the excellence of the degree programs.

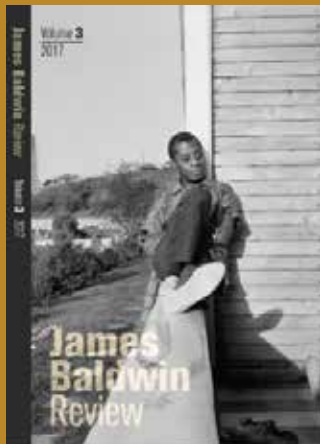
In addition, McBride expanded outreach efforts to create a greater sense of community among graduate students and postdoctoral fellows, established the Office of Diversity and Inclusion within the school, and significantly increased the number of training grants and other sources of external funding to support graduate students and postdocs.

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McBride received his undergraduate degree in English and African American Studies from Princeton University. He earned his master's and PhD in English from the University of California–Los Angeles. He previously served as dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at the University of Illinois–Chicago, and on the faculty of the University of Pittsburgh.

An award-winning author of numerous publications that bring together literary and intellectual strands on race theory, black studies, and sexuality studies, McBride is the founder and coeditor of the *James Baldwin Review*. His work has received special citations from the Crompton-Noll Award Committee of the Modern Language Association, and his research has been supported by the Mellon Foundation, the Ford Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

McBride has served on the executive committee of the Association of American Universities Association of Graduate Schools, the board of directors of American Colleges and Universities, and the GRE Board, among others.



With the appointment of Provost McBride, the *James Baldwin Review* is now housed in AAS; see <http://aas.emory.edu/home/people/james-baldwin-review/index.html>. The annual journal features peer-reviewed critical and creative work on the life, writings, and legacy of James Baldwin.

Each issue contains a review of recent Baldwin scholarship and an award-winning graduate student essay. *James Baldwin Review* publishes essays that invigorate scholarship on James Baldwin; catalyze explorations of the literary, political, and cultural influence of Baldwin's writing and political activism; and deepen our understanding and appreciation of this complex and luminary figure.

The journal provides a vibrant and multidisciplinary forum for the international community of Baldwin scholars, students, and enthusiasts.

The editors encourage the submission of cross-disciplinary articles on the life, writings, and legacy of Baldwin. Possible contributors are welcome to discuss an article proposal or outline with the managing editor before committing to a full submission.

For the current volume, and for detailed submission instructions, please visit our website: <https://jbr.openlibrary.manchester.ac.uk/index.php/jbr/index>.

# Timmons receives Byrd Scholarship

Monet Timmons is the recipient of the inaugural Rudolph P. Byrd Scholarship. Byrd was the Goodrich C. White Professor of American Studies and served as the director of the Department of African American Studies for many years. The scholarship supports an Emory College of Arts and Sciences student who demonstrates leadership activities that address social, political, cultural and professional issues in the African American community at Emory.

Timmons is a senior double-majoring in English and African American Studies. Originally from San Francisco, she decided to pursue her undergraduate career in Atlanta in order to get a better grounding in African American history and combine that with her passion for literature. In her time at Emory, Monet has taken a number of classes cross-listed between the English and African American Studies departments, ranging from Black Love to the Civil Rights Movement to Blackness in Europe. Moreover, she has utilized the archives available at the Rose Library through the Reading Alice Walker class and the New Negro Renaissance course. After completing her undergraduate degree, Timmons will pursue her PhD in English with a concentration in African diaspora literature.



Monet Timmons

Deeply involved on campus, Timmons is the current secretary on the NAACP executive board. In this capacity, she reaches out to faculty, staff, and students through weekly newsletters updating them on upcoming events. Her work with the NAACP has allowed her to cofound events such as Black Girls Rock, an award show honoring black women on campus. She takes her activism and passion for education for underrepresented groups beyond Emory through the Emory Pipeline Collaborative. Through weekly classes, Timmons has been able to reach out to high school students in the Atlanta public school system and inspire them to apply to college.

## *Congratulations to Our Other Class of 2018 Graduates*

### *Majors*

Sariyah Benoit  
River Bunkley  
Sofia Charlot  
Nellie Hernandez  
Chelsea Jackson

Deion Love  
Kristin McFadden  
Keisha Michel  
Jayla Palmer  
Monae Reid  
Daijah Walker

### *Minors*

Nia Bilal  
Eboni Boone-Neal  
Anshera Galan  
Melissa Koelsch

# Emory's Rhodes Scholar

Congratulations to AAS major Chelsea Jackson, who is one of 32 American college students named a 2018 Rhodes Scholar. Jackson is the first African American student from Emory College to receive the scholarship and the university's 20th student to be selected for the prestigious scholarship, which provides all expenses for two or three years of study at the University of Oxford in England. Rhodes Scholars are chosen for their outstanding scholarly achievements, their character, commitment to others and to the common good, and for their potential for leadership in whatever domains their careers may lead.



Chelsea Jackson

“Chelsea Jackson is a passionate and committed student who uses her intellectual talents and commitment to social justice to better our world,” says Emory University President Claire E. Sterk. “She will be a wonderful ambassador for the United States and Emory as she continues her work at Oxford University.

Jackson plans to earn a master's degree in criminology at Oxford, home of a cutting-edge research center that focuses on the sociology of criminal justice. She hopes to examine how the law can be used to reform the criminal justice system by, for instance, reducing the use of solitary confinement and expanding the maternal rights of incarcerated women.

“I want to learn how race and politics play out in other countries' criminal justice systems to see how that shapes their world view, and to consider new ideas and ways to solve problems that I have not thought of yet,” Jackson says.

After completing her Oxford degree, she plans to return to the US to attend law school to become a civil rights attorney, either with the Department of Justice or a broad-reaching nonprofit focused on social justice.



# Jacinta Saffold: From AAS major to MMUF fellow to PhD

Class of 2012

Major/Minor: AAS and Educational Studies

Jacinta Saffold reflects on her journey to Emory, her decision to major in AAS, and where she stands today.

## Giving Emory the nod

As a high school senior from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Jacinta Saffold was not a stranger to the Emory campus when she received the invitation to participate in Essence of Emory, an invitation-only program designed to celebrate Emory's diverse community. She had been participating in Emory's National Debate Institute for High School Students for the past two summers and was being heavily recruited to attend Emory by the now-retired director Melissa Wade and former recruitment officer Timothy Fields. However, Saffold did not see her future at Emory and instead set her sights on attending Howard University, a historically black college (HBCU) located in Washington, D.C.



Saffold initially declined the Essence of Emory invitation because it conflicted with the HBCU tour planned by the Milwaukee Public Schools District. However, unbeknownst to her, Timothy Fields contacted her parents to ensure that they were aware she had declined the all-expense-paid invitation to Essence. Of course, her parents were not aware, and her mother accepted the invitation on her behalf.

Saffold attended the HBCU tour with her mother. As the tour bus approached Baltimore airport, Saffold's mother's voice came over the loud speaker asking her to come to the front of the bus with all of her belongings. Saffold was shocked and embarrassed, but proceeded forward having no idea what was about to occur. Her mother told her that she would be leaving the tour early and boarding a plane to Atlanta to attend Essence weekend. The experience at Essence and her financial aid packet solidified the decision to come to Emory.

## The road to AAS

In fall 2008, Saffold entered her freshman year undecided as to a major. However, during the New Student orientation, she was drawn to the table for the Department of African American Studies. She inquired about the readings for the freshman seminar on Civil Rights, and Saffold recalls how Nagueyalti Warren, then director of undergraduate studies, proceeded to inform her that she would be required to read *all* of the books that were spread across the table. Saffold hurriedly left and went to visit other tables, but there was something about Warren that brought her back to the AAS table.

*continued*

The path to majoring in AAS was not an easy one. After taking an AAS freshman seminar in the fall, Saffold took another AAS class taught by Warren the next semester. However, it was not until her sophomore year, during which she took only AAS courses, that she knew she would major in AAS. She was excited about her decision and shared it with her mother, but her mom did not share her enthusiasm. Saffold's mother was skeptical of the major because she was unsure what kind of career path it would lead to, but Saffold was insistent and told her mother that she was going to have Warren's job. Her mother suggested that she go back and meet with Warren to map out what type of career path or job opportunities she would have by majoring in African American Studies. Warren met with Saffold, and together they devised a plan for Saffold to double-major in African American Studies and Educational Studies. The double major would allow Saffold to teach K–12 if she changed her mind about pursuing a doctorate degree.

Majoring in AAS led Saffold to the MMUF program. She applied and gained acceptance, and during the course of her college career Warren served as her faculty mentor, adviser, and model for her career path. Through MMUF, Saffold attended international conferences with Warren and learned to prepare successfully for graduate school.

## Now crossing boundaries habitually

At the end of Saffold's senior year, she had been accepted to the fully funded African American Studies PhD program at the University of Massachusetts–Amherst but was also offered a position to teach in South Korea. Saffold was unsure of what she should do; at her mother's insistence, she went back to talk to Warren, who said, “Jacinta, I did not do all this work for you to go to Korea; you don't have a choice: You are going to UMass. Now go!”

In May 2017, Saffold graduated from the University of Massachusetts–Amherst, with her PhD in African American literature and black feminism. She is currently a Mellon ACLS Public Fellow and the associate director for diversity, equity and student success. The grant-funded project—Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation—allows Saffold to work with colleges and universities and facilitate racial healing discussions that teach diverse communities to listen and hear across difference. These conversations allow campuses and local communities to understand or disagree yet still coexist. Saffold credits the service-learning component of the AAS major for preparing her to have an impact on community.

The African American Studies major has been instrumental in Saffold's scholarly formation. For example, in order to complete her dissertation on African American urban fiction at the turn of the 21st century, she had to create an archive and digitize it. Her exposure to David Eltis's project *Voyages: The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade* database inspired her to take a creative approach to archival research, which led to the creation of a Digital Humanities database of sales records for popular black books. She states that AAS groomed her to cross boundaries habitually—as someone who would not be told what she could not do.

# Martin Luther King Jr. Keynote



OXFORD ROAD  
PRESENTATION ROOM  
MONDAY  
FEBRUARY 5  
5:00 P.M.

*This event is free  
and open to the public.  
Reception to follow.*

## Tim Wise Gives MLK Jr. Day Keynote

Among the nation's most prominent antiracist essayists and educators, Tim Wise's antiracism work traces back to his days as a college activist in the 1980s, fighting for divestment from (and economic sanctions against) apartheid South Africa. After graduation, he threw himself into social justice efforts full-time, as a youth coordinator and associate director of the Louisiana Coalition Against Racism and Nazism—the largest of the many groups organized in the early 1990s to defeat the political candidacies of white supremacist and former Ku Klux Klan leader David Duke. He has served as an adjunct professor at the Smith College School of Social Work, in Northampton, Massachusetts, and from 1999 to 2003 was an adviser to the Fisk University Race Relations Institute in Nashville, Tennessee.

Wise is the author of seven books, including his highly acclaimed memoir, *White Like Me: Reflections on Race from a Privileged Son*, as well as *Dear White America: Letter to a New Minority*, and his latest, *Under the Affluence: Shaming the Poor, Praising the Rich and Sacrificing the Future of America*.

Wise graduated from Tulane University in 1990 and received antiracism training from the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond, in New Orleans.