



EMORY UNIVERSITY

Department of African American Studies

Emory College of Arts and Sciences

Winter 2022

Dear Friends of African American Studies,

Some have likened our current moment to the Redemption and Jim Crow eras, where the U.S. Supreme Court and local governments systematically attacked and undermined African Americans' hard-won legal rights; punished Black people for daring to vote, for daring to act like they were citizens, for daring to assert their right to live. The assault was methodical and systematic.

That evisceration, however, did not go unanswered. African Americans responded in a multi-pronged counteroffensive with the founding of educational institutions, political organizing and voter registration drives, court challenges to racial discrimination, creative productions in literature, music, and art, economic development initiatives, and liberatory religious doctrine and preaching. This was their response to the fundamental, bedrock question: How do we get free?



Our faculty in African American Studies, through their scholarship, mentoring and advising of amazing students, and community engagement, are wrestling with that same question. Prof. Vanessa Siddle Walker's impressive body of award-winning work, exemplifies that commitment. How did Black parents, teachers, students, and administrators maneuver and strategize and organize in their quest for freedom? After decades of important work in the field, in the community, and in professional organizations, her pending retirement is hard-earned and well-deserved and leaves the department grateful for her presence, her wisdom, and her contributions. It also leaves us saddened that she won't be in African American Studies as we launch our new Ph.D. program. But like so many, whom we honor on our 50th anniversary, such as Prof. Delores Aldridge and Prof. Rudolph Byrd, the work of African American Studies is about transformation and answering the question: How do we get free.

Sincerely,

Carol Anderson

Chair, African American Studies

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

*AAS Celebrates Vanessa
Siddle Walker*

2

*In the Wake of Slavery and Dispossession
Symposium*

4

*Undergraduate Student
Achievements*

6

Learning from Vanessa Siddle Walker

Dr. Vanessa Siddle Walker joined the faculty of African American Studies in 2015 as the Samuel Candler Dobbs Professor of African American Studies at Emory University. This year, she will retire after decades of renowned service to the university.



Vanessa Siddle Walker

Walker has studied the segregated education of African American children, considered the climate that permeated the schools, explored the network of professional collaborations that explains their similarity, and unraveled the hidden systems of advocacy that sought equality and justice. Her extensive scholarship and contributions to the history and research of education has distinguished her as one of the foremost experts on the education of African American schoolchildren.

Walker is the author of numerous scholarly publications, articles and books, including *Their Highest Potential: An*

African American School Community in the Segregated South; *Living the Legacy: The Historical African American Professional Network as a Model for University and School Collaborations* and *The Lost Education of Horace Tate: Uncovering the Hidden Heroes Who Fought for Justice in Schools*.

Her outstanding body of work has led to numerous awards and honors including the prestigious Grawmeyer Award in Education and the American Educational Research Association's (AERA) Early Career Award, Best New Female Scholar Award, the Best New Book Award and the Outstanding Book Award. She has also received awards from the Conference of Southern Graduate Schools and the American Education Studies Association. In March 2018, she was voted president-elect of AERA and assumed the presidency in April 2019 until 2020.

During her time at Emory, Walker was also the project founder and director of Teaching in the Urban South (TITUS), which connected educational leaders in public schools with Emory scholars and students during summer learning opportunities and year-round events. Recently, she was awarded 2021 George P. Cuttino Award for Excellence in Mentoring by the University.

Furthermore, her impact has reached beyond the boundaries of her research and classroom. Below, you will find reflections from her colleagues at African American Studies.

From Calvin Warren

The deadline for three articles tormented me, and I had resigned to accept scholastic defeat. Although I was technically 'present' during our faculty meeting, angst and exhaustion preoccupied my thought process (was this intellectual labor even worth it)? I noticed I received a message from Vanessa. She said, "I'm looking at you. Such a powerful intellectual!" These words provided me with the encouragement I needed to finish these articles--from Nietzsche to the 'Karen Call'. I'm forever grateful for her wisdom, generosity of spirit, and humor. Thank you for a phenomenal existence in a contingent world.





From Kali Gross

My time with Vanessa was far too short, but it has been memorable, nonetheless. Vanessa's scholarship is revered, and her professionalism is a model for all of us. She generously elected to overhaul the Department's bylaws—a herculean task that most senior faculty would have rejected outright. She sorted it brilliantly and in short order, and with her phenomenal sense of humor. I am happy that Vanessa is emeritus, since she made it clear that that is what she wanted, but also, I am saddened by what her departure will mean for African American Studies, both the department and the field. We wish you well Vanessa!



Allan Rohan Crite's School's Out (1963)

From Valerie Babb

Even before I met you, in my teaching, in my research, in my outreach, you have been an inspiration. I can't tell you how many times I've taken your name in vain. This painting, Allan Rohan Crite's *School's Out* (1963), reminds me of you. In his portrait of a single-sex elementary school in Boston's South End, he captures what I think is at the heart of your remarkable vision, a deep grounding in community and a realization that education goes beyond the walls of any institution. I will miss you terribly. Wishing you all the best in this next chapter.



From Carol Anderson



Vanessa and I clicked the moment we met each other. I was the incoming chair. She was deciding what her future would look like given that her home department, the Department of Education, had shut down. We went to what was supposed to be a one-hour lunch at Murphy's to have that discussion about what was next. AAS wanted her. She needed to be convinced. Vanessa and I started talking, laughing, breaking bread together, and sharing stories. We talked about our research, our vision for the work, for the department, for our community. We reminisced about why and how we got into the professoriate. And, did I mention lots of laughing and talking? The supposed hour lunch had stretched into timelessness. So much so that the dinner crowd was ready to come in by the time we left. Kindred spirits. Vanessa has gifted us with her wisdom, her energy, her brilliance, her scholarship, and her collegiality and friendship. All she wanted in return was a strong, vibrant department and a rocking chair. She kept her end of the bargain, we had to keep ours.



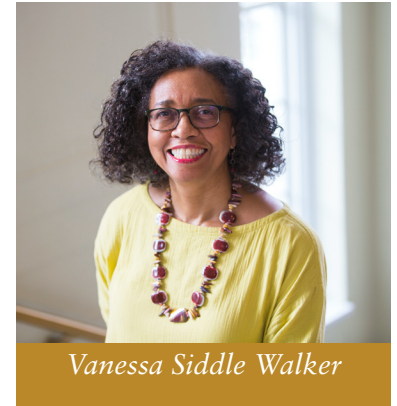
*Vanessa's rocking chair
(Photo Courtesy of Carol Anderson)*

Featuring a Special Letter from Vanessa Siddle Walker:

One hopes for an academic space that is an intellectual home--a place where research ideas can be nourished until their fruit exceeds the original imagination; where colleagues relish productivity, offer quiet guidance, and then applaud visibility; where students embrace new horizons inquisitively before becoming transformative, purposeful leaders in their own generations. One hopes for a place where all the dimensions of personhood can thrive without contradiction or apology, because life—after all—is still bigger than research papers and books.

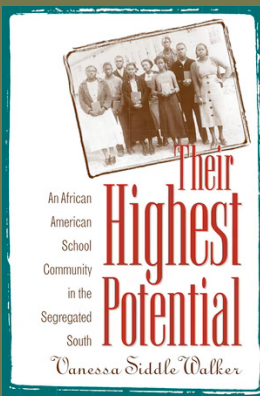
Beyond what I could have hoped, Emory provided. For 24 years I lived the academic dream in the Division of Educational Studies--intentionally mentored into the power and possibilities of the scholarly life. For the last eight years I joyed in the enthusiastic and visionary regeneration of similar intentionality in the Department of African American Studies. For all I was given in both spaces, as well as from the larger Emory community, I am grateful. And with that gratitude comes the heartfelt hope that scholars who follow behind me will one day retire with the same story retold.

As for me, if you are looking for where I imagine new dreams—you may start your search at the beach. . .



Vanessa Siddle Walker

Selected Works by Vanessa Siddle Walker



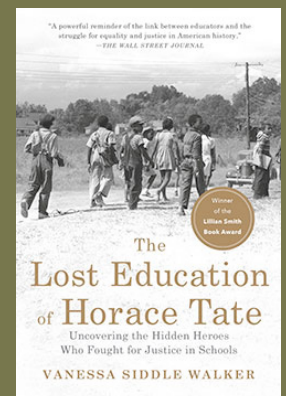
Their Highest Potential: An African American School Community in the Segregated South

African American schools in the segregated South faced enormous obstacles in educating their students. But some of these schools succeeded in providing nurturing educational environments in spite of the injustices of segregation. Vanessa Siddle Walker tells the story of one such school in rural North Carolina, the Caswell County Training School, which operated from 1934 to 1969. Walker captures a segment of the history of African Americans in segregated schools that has been overlooked and that provides important context for the ongoing debate about how best to educate African American children.

The Lost Education of Horace Tate: Uncovering the Hidden Heroes Who Fought for Justice in Schools

This “well-told and inspiring” story (Publishers Weekly, starred review) is the monumental product of Lillian Smith Book Award–winning author Vanessa Siddle Walker’s two-decade investigation into the clandestine travels and meetings—with other educators, Dr. King, Georgia politicians, and even U.S. presidents—of one Dr. Horace Tate, a former Georgia school teacher, principal, and state senator. In a sweeping work

“that reads like a companion piece to Hidden Figures” (Atlanta Journal-Constitution), post-Brown generations will encounter invaluable lessons for today from the educators behind countless historical battles—in courtrooms, schools, and communities—for the quality education of black children.



In the Wake of Slavery and Dispossession Symposium



As a member of the Universities Studying Slavery consortium, Emory University held a symposium titled, “In the Wake of Slavery and Dispossession: Emory, Racism and the Journey towards Restorative Justice,” on September 29 – October 1, 2021, at both the Emory Atlanta and Oxford campuses. This hybrid in-person and virtual symposium examined the university’s history and discovered its connections to enslaved labor and Indigenous dispossession. This symposium highlighted the ongoing efforts and research in the areas of slavery, dispossession, and restorative justice, with a focus on the legacy of racism and its enduring effects at the university. The sessions included creative interpretations and dialogue, with a primary focus on the perspectives of Black, Native American, and Indigenous peoples. Complementing the sessions were related and ongoing exhibitions.



The Symposium Steering Committee included members from the African American Studies faculty: Carol Anderson, Chair; Walter Rucker, professor of African American studies and history; and Kimberly Wallace-Sanders, associate professor of African American and American studies. Valerie Babb, the Andrew Mellon Professor of Humanities in professor of African American studies and English, also participated in a panel session.

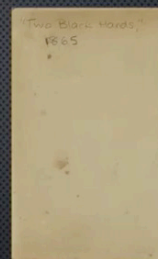


“From the Archives: Black Student Activism” is an online exhibit that depicts evidence of Black student activism at Emory University. Pictured: Black students and their allies protest at the entrance to Cox Hall in 1969. Credit: Emory University Photograph collection, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

Here the portrait is cropped so that the African American woman is virtually erased, leaving only her hands.

The notation on the back of the photograph was added in pencil by a collector:

“Two Black Hands, 1865”.



Virtual Panel Discussion with AAS associate professor, Kimberly Wallace-Sanders presented, “I Looked Out onto the Water and Saw Hands Beckoning Me”: The Wanderer, the “Weeping Time” and the Powerful Black Hands of Unnamed, Unpaid, and Unappreciated Black Women as Caretakers of White Children

Undergraduate Student Achievements

This year, the department proudly highlights a few of our undergraduate students' achievements, including, for the first time, two Rudolph P. Byrd scholarship winners.



Eddy Cabrera, Jr.

Eddy Cabrera, Jr., Major - Rudolph P. Byrd Scholarship Winner

Eddy Cabrera Jr. is a senior in the College of Arts and Sciences, majoring in African American Studies and minoring in Sociology. Within the African American Studies department, he holds the distinction of being the 2021-2022 Rudolph M. Byrd scholar, as well as an honors candidate. He is proudly from the Bronx, NY. In his work on campus, Eddy's greatest contributions are through his commitment to community building, social justice, and the arts. He serves as a Head Moderator of Wonderful Wednesday, President of both AHANA A Cappella and the Black Mental Health Ambassadors, Vice President of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., the Senior Community Advisor for Residence Life, and the current Assistant Music Director for Dooleys Player's 2022 play, "Marie and Rosetta." Previously, Eddy has also served on the Black Men's Initiative executive

board, acted in AdHoc's 2020 musical "Heathers," and was a Resident Advisor for first-year students. Eddy also works as a student assistant in the Office of Residence Life.

"Receiving this scholarship is one of my most cherished achievements at Emory, as it represents my dedication and passion in learning from, and creating Black history. Dr. Byrd was the advisor who motivated my mentor in continuing his education at Emory, and to be included in his legacy feels surreal. Special thanks to Dr. Janeria Easley, Dr. Alix Chapman, and Dr. Justin Hosbey for their help on my final chapter in the AAS department through serving on my thesis committee."

Joy Emenyonu, Major - Rudolph P. Byrd Scholarship Winner

Joy Emenyonu is a Nigerian American Human Health and African American Studies double major student from Aurora, Colorado. During her time at Emory, Joy has been privileged with the opportunity to be a part of and lead Zuri, the African dance troupe. She was also a part of an Environmental Science research team for two years under the advisement of Dr. Tracy Yandle. Joy is involved with the Emory College Council as a legislator and, eventually, became the chair of the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion committee. In this position, Joy has led many initiatives to educate her peers on activism and provided platforms for students of color to speak and be heard. This opportunity allowed her to be a student voice on the Race General Education Requirement implementation committee. And in the meantime, Joy is working on her honors thesis which examines interracial relationships as a measure of social progress.



Joy Emenyonu

"I am so grateful to have been selected for this award. It is so empowering to know that I have not only made a difference in our Emory Community but my peers and advisors value and recognize my efforts."

Undergraduate Achievements continued

About the Rudolph P. Byrd Scholarship

The scholarship recognizes a student in Emory College who demonstrates leadership in activities that address social, political, cultural, and professional issues in the African American community at Emory. Named in memory of Dr. Rudolph P. Byrd, this award seeks to acknowledge the contributions, hard work, and potential of one of Emory College's best students. The selection committee evaluates applicants' academic performance and service to the campus community and Black student body as they match the spirit of the man for whom the scholarship is named.



Niara Foster

Niara Foster, Major - Fox Center's Undergraduate Humanities Honors Fellowship

Niara E. Foster was awarded the Fox Center Undergraduate Humanities Honors Fellowship for her senior honors thesis, "Second Sight: Granny Midwives as Insurgent Proponents of Black Health in the Progressive Era." Niara is a Chicago native and African American Studies Senior. During her time at Emory, she has served her community in several ways. This includes her time as a mentor in the Emory Pipeline Collaborative, as the Inventory Manager of the Emory Career Center Clothing Closet, the Outreach Chair and Newsletter Editor for Emory's Black Mental Health Ambassadors, the Secretary and Membership Chairman of the Nu Alpha Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., and the Vice President of Student Experience & Chair of the Student Concerns Committee in Emory's 55th Student Government

Association.

Niara's honors thesis, for which Dr. Carol Anderson is the advisor, explores the radical work of lay Black or 'granny' midwives. Her project investigates the care that granny midwives delivered as hoodoo healers and medical providers to birthing Black mothers while navigating the changing landscape of the medical profession.

About the Fox Center Undergraduate Humanities Honors Fellowship

The Fox Center for Humanistic Inquiry, with the Emory College Honors Program, offer undergraduate fellowships to support work on completing projects for one semester. Fox Center Honors Fellows will have full participation in all Center activities. Honors Fellows present their work at the Spring Colloquium. In addition to shared office space at the Center, Fellows receive a research stipend.