



EMORY  
UNIVERSITY

Department of  
African American Studies

# AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES FALL 2025 NEWSLETTER

# Rudolph P. Byrd Scholarship Recipients

The Rudolph P. Byrd Memorial Scholarship recognizes a senior at 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 acknowledges the contributions, hard work, and potential of one of Emory College's best students. The selection committee evaluates applicants' academic performance, work ethic, and service to the campus community and Black student body as they match the spirit of the man for whom the scholarship is named. In his time at Emory, Dr. Byrd served as chair of the Department of African American Studies and labored for many years to



establish the James Weldon Johnson Institute for the Study of Race & Difference on this campus. He also launched the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship at Emory and the related United Negro College Fund/Mellon Summer Institute.

He helped train undergraduate and graduate students to rise to the top of their professional fields, and he left a body of work that has helped to shape and challenge our sense of African American literary history.





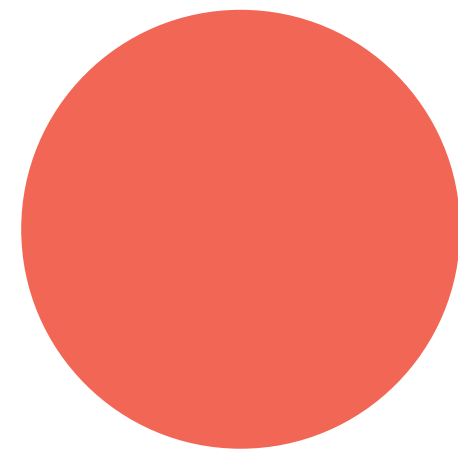
# DEVYN WONG

Devyn Wong is majoring in Political Science with a minor in African American Studies on the pre-law track. Passionate about securing equal justice, Devyn is committed to advocating for systemically disadvantaged communities.



# M EGBERONGBE

M Egberongbe studies Psychology and African American Studies, is a Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellow and serves as Vice President of the Black Student Alliance at Emory, chair of its Advocacy Committee, and member of Emory's Student Programming Council as an extension of their passion for advocacy and community building.



# 2024-2025 Pellom McDaniels Fellowship Award Winner



The Pellom McDaniels Fellowship is a fellowship that supports awards for Emory students, faculty, staff and visiting scholars who make use of Emory's Rose Library collections documenting African American history and culture.

The 2024-2025 Pellom McDaniels Fellowship was awarded to Tyler Martinez, an African American Studies major and the current Emory Student Government Association (SGA) president.

Written By Dr. Michelle Gordon

His winning essay was about Countee Cullen's children's book, *The Zoo*, which he produced for Dr. Michelle Gordon's class, AAS 262: Survey of African American Literature Since 1900, in Spring 2024. Tyler's essay comes from his "critical edition" assignment, which involved assembling a table of contents of select primary and secondary sources related to a single African American literary text. The assignment also required each student write a critical essay to serve as the introduction to the "critical edition" of their chosen text. Much like scholarly introductions to published critical editions for canonical works like Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (once edited by emeritus Emory faculty member, Dr. Frances Smith Foster), the assignment introduction had to frame and contextualize the literary text and its significance and also explain the selection of primary and secondary sources and how those sources help illuminate the literature and further facilitate study of the text. Cullen is best known as a celebrated poet of the New Negro or Harlem Renaissance, and the children's book itself is rare. Tyler's project and essay offer real contributions to the collective knowledge and scholarship about Cullen and his complex legacy.

Tyler first encountered *The Zoo* in a class session working with materials in the Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library.





## BURT H. MASTERS SCHOLAR ENDOWMENT AWARD

**Leslie Houseworth**, a second-year AAS graduate student, was selected as a recipient of the 2025 Burt H. Masters Scholar Endowment Award. In a year filled with highly competitive applicants, Leslie's application rose to the top in the selection process.

## COMPREHENSIVE EXAM COMPLETION

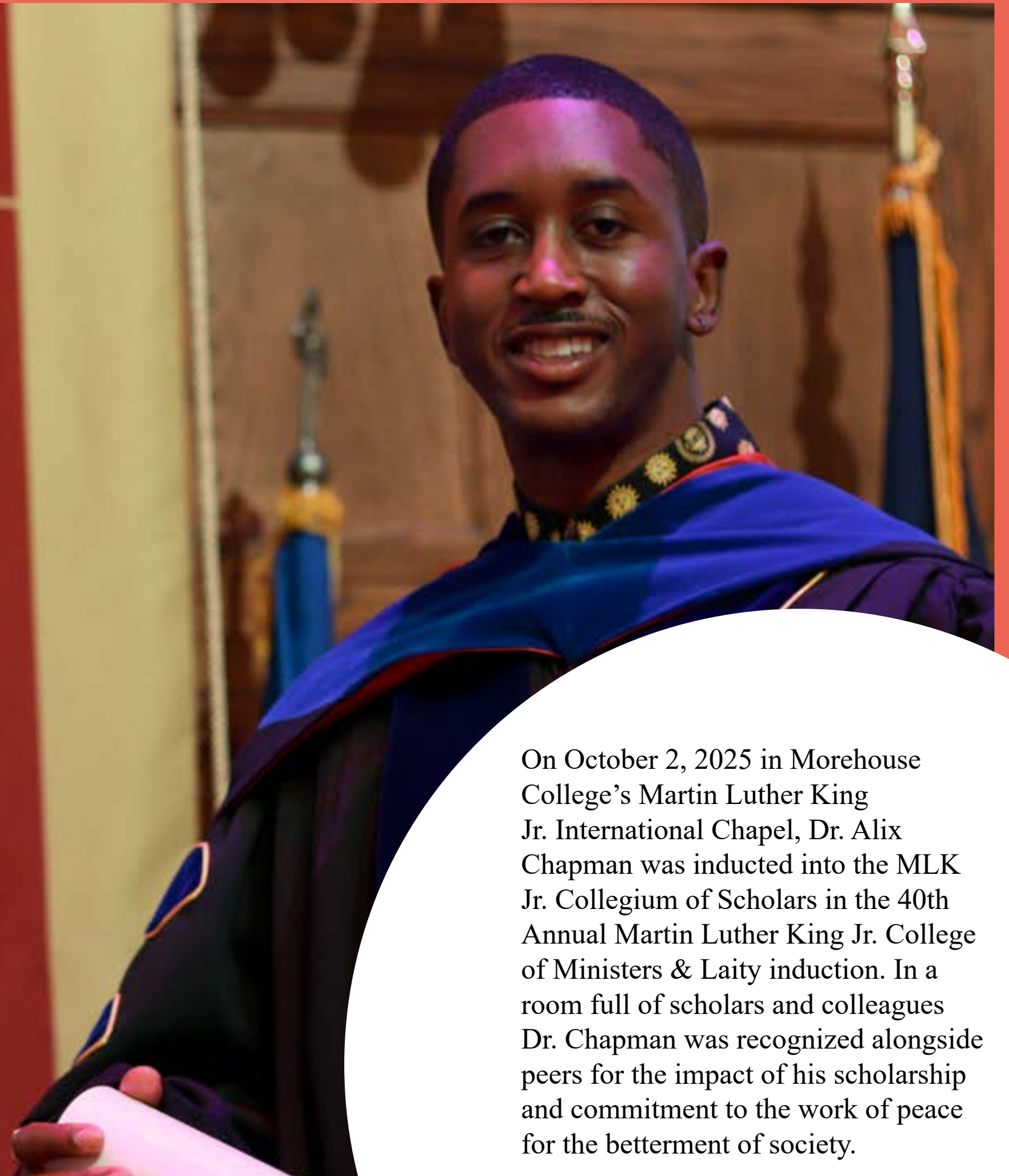
Our AAS Ph.D. students (Lizette London, Brenda Umutoniwase and Cheyenne Ross) completed their comprehensive exams this semester, crossing a major milestone in the Ph.D. program.





# Morehouse College

## THE GLOBAL POWER OF AN IDEA



On October 2, 2025 in Morehouse College's Martin Luther King Jr. International Chapel, Dr. Alix Chapman was inducted into the MLK Jr. Collegium of Scholars in the 40th Annual Martin Luther King Jr. College of Ministers & Laity induction. In a room full of scholars and colleagues Dr. Chapman was recognized alongside peers for the impact of his scholarship and commitment to the work of peace for the betterment of society.



Dr. Leslie Harris



# LEAVING NEW ORLEANS: A PERSONAL URBAN HISTORY





*“This term ‘Creole’ is such an important, historically complex source of identity and that identity has changed over time.”*

**- Dr. Leslie Harris**

On Monday, September 29, 2025, **Dr. Leslie Harris**, a decorated historian at Northwestern University, scholar and beloved former colleague and chair of Emory’s Department of African American Studies joined us in Convocation Hall Room 204 to share and discuss her current book project, an exploration of personal familial history in New Orleans. This event was supported by Emory College of Arts and Sciences (ECAS) and co-sponsored by the Department of African American Studies and the History Department. Convocation Hall Room 204 quickly filled up and the discussion moved to

a space across the hall to accommodate the members of the Emory community and broader network of scholars and friends all excited for this moving discussion. Dr. Barbara Krauthamer introduced Dr. Harris in heartfelt words and after sharing a hug, Dr. Harris took the podium. Exploring her lineage and the complicated history of the creole identity and its relationship to her family and the shifting of her research for her book, Dr. Harris held the room. The Q&A was equally powerful and engaging.







## FALL 2025 UNDERGRADUATE OPEN HOUSE

On Wednesday, October 1, 2025, we held our Fall Undergraduate Open House, providing students an opportunity to meet with their peers, AAS faculty, and staff. Joined by the Pathways Center's Rey Murat and Kendra Owens from the Office of Career & Professional Development, students gained valuable information about how the Pathways Center provides opportunities and guidance for students as they move toward their professional goals and how their degree can help in shaping that path. Socializing over snacks and games, students were engaged and enthusiastic about the opportunity to enroll in the classes offered by our faculty.





*AN  
OPPORTUNITY  
TO MEET WITH  
AAS FACULTY,  
STAFF AND  
PEERS*





# 2025 ASALH CONFERENCE

## REFLECTIONS FROM OUR GRADUATE STUDENTS

Participating in the round table discussion, “Of Black Study: Interrogating and Reimagining the Un/Discipline” at the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH) conference was stimulating. One of the key takeaways from the conference was the power of interdisciplinary dialogue and the vibrancy and diversity of approaches within Black Studies. Engaging with my fellow scholars and seeing how we all integrate history, literature, performing arts, and cultural studies not only broadened my perspective but also highlighted new ways to frame my research in the context of larger conversations about race, memory, and embodied knowledge. I was particularly inspired by Liz’s research and her proximity to her chosen field which reinforced the importance of centering lived experiences and cultural memory in scholarship. Coming from the Caribbean,

my perspective brought a diasporic lens that expanded the conversation beyond a U.S.-centric framework, highlighting Afro-Indigenous and Afro-Caribbean voices. This allowed for a more robust dialogue on the multiplicity of Blackness across the diaspora, emphasizing the importance of situating African American Studies within a global context that engages the Americas, the Caribbean, and beyond. Overall, my experience at ASALH was both intellectually stimulating and deeply affirming. The conference provided a space to share my work, receive feedback from peers and mentors, and connect with a vibrant network of scholars and practitioners who are similarly committed to advancing the study of African American culture.

**-Ralycia Andrews**



My time at the 2025 ASALH Conference was a beautiful introduction to the kind of community that Black Studies builds and sustains. Participating in a panel alongside my third-cohort colleague, Raylicia, and inaugural cohort members, Cheyenne and Liz, gave me the opportunity to engage in a thoughtful conversation about what Black Studies means to me, why I chose to pursue it at the doctoral level---particularly at Emory---and what my boldest dreams are for the future of the field.

In such tumultuous times, the sense of community fostered by this conference felt essential. Supported not only by fellow students but also by faculty, the panel reaffirmed my belief in the possibility of a Black Studies that remains deeply rooted in its origins while continuing to grow. I am deeply grateful for the opportunity and the connections that this experience made possible.  
- **Kourtney Payne**







# MELLON MAYS SOUTHEAST REGIONAL CONFERENCE

*NOVEMBER 7-9*



As our Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellows continue work on their research projects, exploring a wide array of interests that intersect with lived realities and broader research interests, the MMUF Southeast Regional Conference (SERC) was an opportunity for fellows to engage with their peers in the region and gain valuable experience presenting research and networking.

CAMILLE OLIVIA HANKS COBBY, Ed. D. ACADEMIC CENTER





This year, the conference was held in Atlanta, organized by the UNCF/Mellon Programs (based at Spelman College) and Emory, which brought students from six universities and eight UNCF colleges to both campuses. Friday's events included a presentation from Dr. Kyras Malika Daniels, Emory's faculty co-coordinator, speaking to fellows as part of the Full Circle Mellon Panel, sharing her experience and insight in conversation with fellow Full Circle Mellons; those who were MMUF

fellows as undergrads and are now faculty. Saturday, November 8, 2025, students met at Spelman's Camille Olivia Hanks Cosby, Ed.D. Academic Center and shared their research in panels with AAS Ph.D. students Kourtney Payne, Nitara C., and Ralycia Andrews serving as moderators. Engaging with questions and feedback, MMUF students left with even more insight about their research before coming to Emory's R. Randall Rollins Building Ballroom for the graduate fair, where they met







with representatives from various graduate programs of interest, including AAS Graduate Program Coordinator Charles Jackson. With dinner held in Emory's

Convocation Hall and the conclusion of the 2025 SERC, Dr. Erica Armstrong Dunbar captured the attention of everyone in attendance with her moving keynote speech. Sharing joy

in research and the opportunities in that joy, like her work as co-executive producer on HBO Max's six-time Emmy-nominated show *The Gilded Age*, her keynote

highlighted the endless possibilities opened through research and the beauty of trusting that process. The fellowship was wonderful, as was the food. As

the conference concluded, MMUF fellows, coordinators, and guests left carrying the joy of the experience, enriched and prepared to continue their research.

