



EMORY UNIVERSITY

# Department of African American Studies

Emory College of Arts and Sciences

Fall 2019

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

*New Faculty: Alix Chapman*  
2

*New Faculty: Janeria Easley*  
3

*Summer Faculty Research  
Trips*  
4

*New Faculty: Jessica Lynn  
Stewart*  
6

*New Faculty: Meina Yates-  
Richard*  
7

*New Staff: Gevin Brown and  
LaTreshia Scott*  
8

*Recognition of the AAS Class  
of 2019*  
10

*Events of Interest*  
13

## Dear Friends of African American Studies,

In 1964, legendary singer Sam Cooke recorded a song that would become one of the anthems of the Civil Rights Movement, “A Change is Gonna Come.” In so many ways, the transformation that is happening in the Department of African American Studies is a testament to that change.

It is a change fueled by the recognition that what we are facing in society and at the university requires a department ready to meet the educational, political, cultural, economic, and religious challenges and opportunities that will confront our students and our communities.

It is a recognition that the stakes are too high, the rewards too great, to turn away. Instead, the faculty and staff additions to the Department of African American Studies have already expanded our vision, deepened our energy, widened our research breadth and depth, and reaffirmed our commitment to community engagement.



None of this would have been possible without wonderful colleagues and the wise leadership that Professor Dianne Stewart provided as interim chair during A/Y 2018-19, while I was on a Guggenheim fellowship.

This newsletter provides just a glimpse into the wonderful changes in the department and, stay tuned, there is so much more to come!

Sincerely,

*Carol Anderson*

Chair, African American Studies

# *New Core Faculty Member, Dr. Alix Andrew Chapman, on the Academy and Culture*



*Alix Chapman*

## *From Culture to the Academy*

Dr. Alix Chapman is excited to build bridges between marginalized communities in the Atlanta area and the Emory campus community. Over the last four years, he has become familiar with a thriving arts and activist scene locally, and wants to provide marginalized groups a platform through his teaching and service. He believes there are important connections to be made between the often-overlooked cultural expressions of black and queer youth and the academy.

He is also looking forward to creating future programming that explores the cultural landscape of Atlanta and the region, and wants to draw connections between his interest in contemporary arts and media and the rich archival resources available at Emory.

## *Intersecting Activism with Research and Teaching*

Even after entering graduate school Chapman was not committed to a future in the professoriate. Early on he was often told that his research interests in Black Queer Studies, Black Feminisms, and cultural production was too narrow if not tangential to the political demands of our current moment. With time, he realized that there was a need for intersectional and anti-assimilationist approaches to black expressive culture that his work addressed. Moreover, he found research and teaching personally fulfilling in ways he had not imagined and looks forward to teaching courses in Black Music, Black Queer Studies, and critical ethnography.

When asked what he wants the Emory community to know about him, he stated, “I would like students and my colleagues to know that I am passionate about community-engaged scholarship and pursuing social justice initiatives within and outside the academy.”

# *Appreciating the Nuances of African American Studies with New Core Faculty*

## *Dr. Janeria Easley*

As a sociologist by training with a background in English, Dr. Janeria Easley is looking forward to being part of an interdisciplinary department where African American studies is valued and centralized.

Joining the faculty in Fall 2019, Easley is an Assistant Professor of African American Studies. She received her B.A in Sociology and English from Duke University, and earned her Ph.D. in Sociology, with a concentration in Demography, from Princeton University. Prior to joining Emory's faculty, Easley completed a Vice Provost's Postdoctoral Fellowship at the University of Pennsylvania.

While her current research is defined by its sociological and quantitative concepts, Easley was drawn to how the nuances of the study of the African American experience is threaded through the different disciplines that make up the department. In one particular instance, Easley recalled a discussion with one of her students who noted stark differences in the way another African American Studies Professor was defining the concept of racism to the way she presented it. Easley said that being in a department like African American studies where different

disciplines converge invites students to wrestle with and utilize multiple frameworks. Easley adds, this should encourage students to appreciate the value of the interdisciplinary nature of African American studies. In fact, the different viewpoints allow students to introduce different definitions in conversations with their peers leading to robust, engaging discourse.



In addition to becoming part of a diverse interdisciplinary department, Easley is excited about working closely with undergraduates of the Department of African American Studies. She recalled that one of the key highlights from her first visit to Emory was a captivating interaction with some of the students of African American Studies. "We had a conversation, and while I don't remember everything we talked about, I know it covered everything from beauty to history to neighborhood(s), and then to wealth," Easley commented. "I am very excited to have those kinds of students in my classroom." Easley will be teaching AAS 247/SOC 247 - "Racial & Ethnic Relations" and AAS 385 - "Demography of Black America" for the Fall 2019 semester.

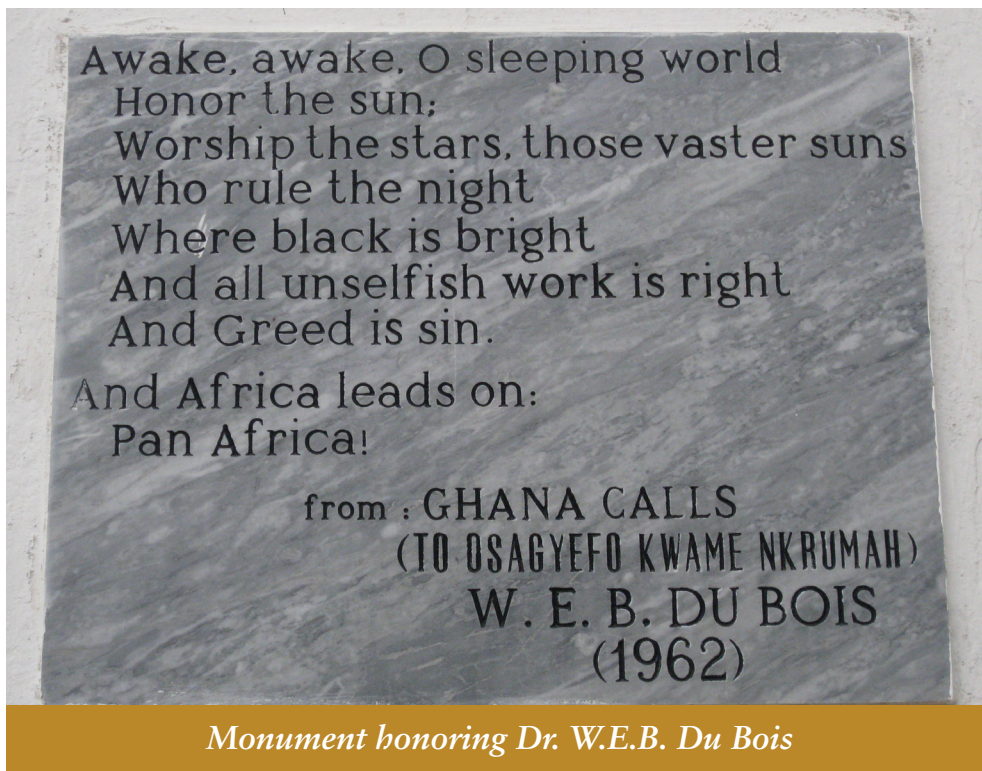


# Dr. Walter Rucker on Recent Summer Travel to Ghana

In late August 1619, the first group of about 20 Atlantic Africans disembarked from an European ship in the British North American colony of Jamestown, Virginia. Given the importance of the diasporic histories of African Americans, Ghana welcomed African Americans to visit in 2019 in what its government heralded as the “Year of Return”—honoring the 400th anniversary of the history of African Americans in what became the United States. So, as part of a family pilgrimage and to attend a conference sponsored by the Ghana Studies Association, I journeyed to Ghana this past summer for my 16th time since 2002.



*Dr. Walter Rucker, Dr. Abena Dove Osseo-Asare (UT Austin/History), Dr. Bayo Holsey (Emory/Anthropology), and family.*



*Monument honoring Dr. W.E.B. Du Bois*

As a site of an enormous amount of heritage tourism, Ghana has much to offer to African Americans and those who study the Black Atlantic and African diaspora history. From its three massive slave castles and about a dozen slave forts to its monuments honoring Dr. W.E.B. Du Bois—who is buried on the grounds of the Du Bois Centre for Pan African Research in Accra—Ghana’s long history stretches back many centuries. From this one coast and hinterland along West Africa’s Atlantic coast, we get kente cloth, adinkra symbols (iconographic sigils embedded with proverbial

meaning, like “Sankofa”), Anansi the Spider folktales, the Kingdom of Asante, and one of the greatest defenders and theorists of Pan Africanism—Dr. Kwame Nkrumah. Elmina castle is fabled to be the location where a young



Christopher Columbus witnessed a key event in the making of the Atlantic World in 1482—ten years before he was commissioned to sail across the Atlantic to find a better route to Asia. Ghana was the first African nation to emerge from under European colonial domination in 1957. Ghana's name, a reference to an ancient Western Sudanic Empire, and its national flag—the red, black, and green tricolor created by Jamaica's Marcus Garvey and adorned, no less, with a black star—serve as symbols for its long history and its many connections across the Atlantic to the foundations of Pan Africanist consciousness and African liberation.



*Independence Monument in Accra*

Perhaps for these many reasons, Ghana has long attracted African American and Afro-Caribbean visitors including President Barack Obama, Michelle Obama, Maya Angelou, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, Muhammad Ali, Rita Marley, George Padmore, Dr. Du Bois, and Shirley Graham Du Bois. In sum, there are many compelling reasons to visit Ghana; however, I was there to do some field work and to bask in the brilliance of the attendees at the Ghana Studies Association conference—including Dr. Abena Dove Osseo-Asare (UT Austin/History) and my partner, Dr. Bayo Holsey (Emory/Anthropology).



*Elmina Slave Castle*

# *The Road to Emory with New Core Faculty Dr. Jessica Stewart*

## *Emory: A Dream Deferred*

As a senior in high school, Dr. Jessica Stewart, dreamed of attending Emory University, but a scholarship took her elsewhere. As she completed her undergraduate studies with a major in Philosophy, Political Science and Economics, she decided to attend graduate school to study Health Systems Management. It was during her post-graduate training at the Mayo Clinic, that the question, “what do you want to do and what are your interests?” was asked of her. After speaking with her professors and contemplating, Dr. Stewart made the decision to follow her passion for politics and pursue a career in the academy at UCLA.



*Jessica Stewart*

The decision to apply for the Assistant Professor of Political Economy of Race position at Emory University came at the prompting of her colleague. When Stewart arrived on Emory’s campus, she was reminded of her dream to attend school here. Having an opportunity to teach at her dream school, coupled with Dr. Carol Anderson’s and the faculty’s vision of building the Department of African American Studies to one of the top three programs in the nation, cemented the fact that she wanted to be an active participant in the growth and innovation needed to achieve this goal.

## *Emory: A Dream Realized*

Dr. Stewart is excited to be at Emory and looks forward to engaging with the students, building community between Emory, Atlanta and the department as well establishing personal roots. Being from Chicago, where she’s had a strong sense of community and family, Stewart believes that environments where she feels part of the whole and can contribute to its growth is where she thrives the most.

As for teaching, Stewart is most excited to share her course, Race, Place and Political Economy, with Emory students. This course explores spatialized racial progress and complex forces and factors that shape our everyday life. It focuses on what students are seeing in everyday life like housing, education, and jobs. Stewart states that, “it is a fun course to get a real world application of what politics, race and money looks like everyday.”

When asked what she wanted the Emory community to know about her, Dr. Stewart was candid in her answer by stating that she is knee deep in the path of becoming her own. She is excited to explore the many ideas she has as a researcher and to dig in as a professor and as a member of the Emory and AAS community.

# *New Core Faculty Dr. Meina Yates-Richard and the Sounds of Literature*

What does it mean to “listen” to a text? Dr. Meina Yates-Richard approaches the study of African American literature and culture by “listening”: her research examines how sounds are connected with imagined freedom.



*Meina Yates-Richard*

Specifically, her work explores the relationship between sounds, which include the literary representations of sounds and the function of sounds, and liberation ideologies in African American and African Diasporic literatures and cultural production.

As one of the new faculty joining the department, Yates-Richard is an Assistant Professor of African American Studies and English at Emory University, having earned her B.A. from the University of Houston, and her M.A. and PhD at Rice University. She has also earned a Doctoral Certificate from the Center for the Study of Women, Gender and Sexuality at Rice University. During her first year at Emory University, Yates-Richard has been conducting archival research at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in New York City, as part of her Ford Foundation Postdoctoral Fellowship.

Adopting her unique approach to literature and culture, Yates-Richard will be introducing a new mode of study to AAS 359/ENG 359 - “Studies in African American Literature: 1900 to Present”

in the Fall 2019 semester by way of “listening”. Students who take this literary survey course, which deals with canonical texts of African American literature from 1900 to the present, will be looking into how sounds and the heard world are interpreted through these major literary works. Yates-Richard is most excited about teaching this particular course, stating that “sound studies is a new idea, but if we pay close attention and ‘listen’ to the canon text, these sonic interpretations have always been there.”

Yates-Richard is looking forward to not only the course itself but also being in the classroom. She remarks that the best part of teaching is learning with her students: “Even if I am an expert in this field, I like the opportunity to learn from my students because of the unique experiences and perspectives that they will bring [to class discussions].” Yates-Richard hopes to engage in vigorous knowledge production with her students after being amazed by the insight students were able to offer in courses she has previously taught.

By enriching a diversified learning environment with her unique methodology of “listening” to African American literature, Yates-Richard is optimistic that her courses will be essential to the way her students understand the world as it is today. Yates-Richard will be teaching AAS 359/ENG 359 - “Studies in African American Literature: 1900 to Present” and AAS 485/ENG 489 - “Special Topics Seminar: Representing Slavery in 20th and 21st Century African American Literature and Culture” for the Fall 2019 semester.



# *The Department welcomes two new staff members*

In the African American Studies department, we take pride in the diverse talents and expertise that encompasses our team members. We, therefore, wholeheartedly welcome new personnel whose innovative minds and collaborative abilities will help the department meet our common goals.

## *Ms. LaTreshia Scott, Academic Undergraduate Program Coordinator*



*Ms. LaTreshia Scott*

We welcome our latest departmental addition, Ms. LaTreshia Scott as our new Undergraduate Program Coordinator. She embodies our discipline's commitment to empowerment. Ms. Scott earned a Master's in Healthcare Administration from Walden University and double majored in Biology and Psychology at Georgia Southern University. She has held various roles with increasing leadership responsibility, ranging from coordinating and dispersing group and supplemental benefits, developing new departmental processes, and spearheading projects designed to increase productivity through a concerted, interdisciplinary approach.

Her research abilities, experience, and academic accolades will prove invaluable as we continue creating resources and avenues geared to inform, educate, and serve students. Coupled with a keen eye for detail, Scott brings expertise in managing complex projects, the analytical competence to adopt new software to the organization's needs, a drive to create an educational

empowerment series, and an overall ability to support all administrative aspects of the Department of African American Studies.

Scott will work closely with the Director of Undergraduate Studies Dr. Michelle Gordon and our Senior Academic Department Administrator, La Shanda Perryman. Please join us in welcoming Scott to the department.

## *Mr. Gevin Brown, Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship Program Coordinator*

Gevin Brown will serve as a new Program Coordinator in the African American Studies department, working directly with the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship, at Emory University. He received his BA in Interdisciplinary Studies and recently an MA in American Studies from The University of Alabama.

Born and raised in Birmingham, Alabama, Brown has a deep commitment



*Mr. Gevin Brown*



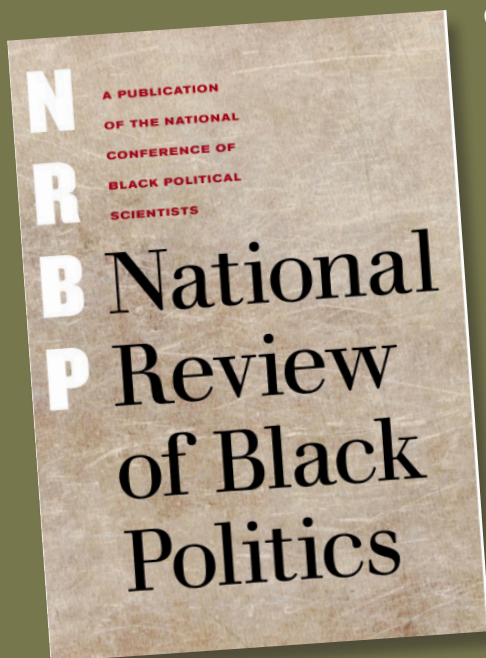
to Southern history and its place in American culture. This commitment has led him to pursue an academic career rooted in the particular experiences of black people in the United States as they navigate life within our nation's institutions. His research interests include the role of culturally relevant programming in higher education, the impact of data centrism on vulnerable communities, and the political practices of black queer artists in the twenty-first century.

During his time at The University of Alabama, Gevin had been actively engaged in supporting students of color as they progress through the institution. He has worked with various cultural departments, most notably with the Crossroads Community Engagement Center (CCEC) which is the University of Alabama's intercultural engagement office. CCEC has had a lasting impact on the campus community through the facilitation of campus dialogues on diversity and inclusion, as well as the implementation of cultural heritage month programming.

Brown was, therefore, the desirable choice to support Professor Dianne Stewart, coordinator of the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship Program (MMUF). MMUF is a signature program designed to increase diversity of America's college and university faculty. See link for the success of Emory's program to date: <http://mellonmays.emory.edu/>.

Considering the unique history of the city of Atlanta, Brown is excited to build relationships at Emory and within the surrounding communities. He is also looking forward to connecting with students in Emory's African American Studies department and assisting in the completion of their educational journeys.

## *New From UC Press*



Coming in January 2020, **National Review of Black Politics** is a refereed, international, and interdisciplinary quarterly journal of the National Conference of Black Political Scientists, continuing the scholarly legacy of National Political Science Review published continually from 1989-2019. NRBP publishes exceptional quality scholarship related to the experiences of African Americans in the American political community, the African diaspora in the Western Hemisphere, and on questions of Black Politics and the politics of race-making globally.

### **Editors**

Pearl K. Dowe, Oxford College,  
Emory University  
Andra Gillespie, Emory University

### **Book Review Editor**

Shenita Brazelton, Tuskegee University

# 2019 Graduating Class



## **Bradley “James” Bagans, Jr. - Double Major**

Bradley “James” Bagans, Jr. hails from a small town north of Detroit. While at Emory, he worked in a neuro-oncology lab and in the Center for Civic and Community Engagement, is the former president of Emory Students for Justice in Palestine, and has also co-led the Multi-Ethnic and Racial Group. He served on the exec board of numerous organizations including the Brotherhood of Afrocentric Men and the National Panhellenic Council as a representative of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. He graduated with a BS in Neuroscience and Behavioral Biology with a double major in African American Studies, while having also completed his pre-med requirements. James is seeking a Masters in Public Health and an MD/JD, with hopes to one day work in the Caribbean in public health and human rights advocacy.



## **Gebereal Baitey – Major**

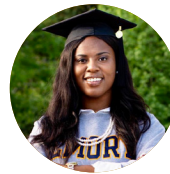
Gebereal Baitey hails from Morristown, New Jersey. He graduated from Emory University in Atlanta, GA as an African-American Studies and Sociology double-major and served as a representative of Emory’s chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). He is a recipient of an NAACP Student-Athlete Image Award and a member of both the University Athletic Association All-Academic Team and Emory’s Honorary Senior 100. He earned highest honors for his senior thesis on the barriers to the education of African-American college athletes. Gebereal plans to pursue his postgraduate studies in education.



## **Faith Burns – Minor**

Faith Burns is an Economics major and African American Studies minor from Westchester County, New York. She is passionate about economic and public

policies affecting low-income communities of color. While at Emory University, Faith led a weekly service trip through Volunteer Emory and completed research on poverty-reduction initiatives across the country. After graduation, Faith will be working full-time for an organization that conducts public policy research and analysis, with an emphasis on economic equity in marginalized communities.



## **Maya Foster – Major**

Maya Foster hails from Brooklyn, NY, and graduated with a major in African-American Studies and a minor in Philosophy. Maya served as an Emory Commission on Racial and Social Justice Intern, the Emory Student Government Association (SGA) Vice President of Diversity & Equity, and Executive Vice President of the 52nd legislature of SGA. Maya was one of Emory’s 100 Senior Honorary award recipients, as well as the 2017 recipient of Who’s Who of American Colleges and Universities at Oxford College. Her interests include critical race theory, criminal justice reform, and general matters concerning Black people and the law. For these reasons, Maya conducted research on the efficacy and truth of a well-known legal principle: the presumption of innocence. Maya successfully defended her thesis and received the highest honors and plans to attend law school in the fall to pursue a career in criminal or civil law.



## **Bobbye Hampton – Major**

Bobbye Hampton is from Dallas, Texas and majored in African American Studies and Predictive Health. Her time at Emory was devoted to enhancing the experiences of Black & Brown students through serving as NAACP President, EBSU Senior Staff Administrator, and an Emory College Social Justice Intern. Bobbye received numerous awards during her time at Emory including 100 Senior Honorary along

with Graduating Women of Excellence, and is a Horace Tate Scholar. After graduation Bobbye will be attending Harvard's Graduate School of Education's Teacher Preparation Program to obtain a Master's Degree.



**Mustafa Adem – Major**

Mustafa majored in African American Studies and minored in Science, Culture and Society.

They are invested in international justice and effective ways U.S. citizens can challenge and stand in solidarity with international communities. Throughout Mustafa's academic journey, they've made a commitment to scholarly justice by researching topics that are oftentimes understudied—like the plight of Palestinians, the mistreatment of industrial workers in China, and the epigenetic consequences of being a houseless people in the U.S. Mustafa has presented at conferences and held talks throughout the U.S. and England and hopes to continue the tradition of studying and teaching around the globe for people to recognize their subversive potentialities. Mustafa plans to teach in some capacity, prepare for graduate school, and continue DJing across the U.S.



**Najla Jamét Phillips – Double Major**

Najla Jamét Phillips is originally from Los Angeles, California. She graduated from Emory as a double major in English and African American Studies. She was

able to maintain an impressive GPA while being heavily involved on and off campus as an RA, a tour guide at Oxford, and a supervisor at Emory's Telefund. She has many accolades including Volunteer of the Year, the Oxford College Alumni Board Scholarship, the Sammy Clark Scholarship award, Who's Who at Oxford, and was named a Horace Tate Scholar. Najla will be taking her talents to Teach for America where she will be teaching secondary English to students in Metro Atlanta.



**Christell Victoria Roach – Double Major**

Christell Victoria Roach is a writer born and raised in Miami, Florida. She graduated from Emory University

in May 2019, with a Bachelor of Arts

Degree as a double major in Creative Writing & African American Studies. As a Mellon Mays Undergraduate Research Fellow, she studied Blues performance in literature. Her research interests primarily focused on the images and voices of Black women as a rejection of society's historical and cultural lenses, which too often omit and obscure their contributions. Christell is a poet and playwright, who sees research as comprehensive storytelling, allowing her to actualize her goal in “transforming the academy.” She has been awarded the Bradley Currey, Jr. Seminar Travel Grant, the Best Undergraduate Research Essay, the Johnston Fellowship for Travel and Writing, the Academy of American Poets Award, and has been inducted into Emory's 100 Senior Honorary. She is the Editor-in-Chief of Black Star Magazine\* and is a proud member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Incorporated. In the Fall of 2019, Christell will enroll in University of Miami's Master of Fine Arts Creative Writing Program, and she will pursue her doctoral degree in the University of Houston's Literature and Creative Writing Program. A quote she carries within her is “passion overrides talent,” and it pushes her to own the presence in the art she carries.



**Aiyanna Sanders – Major**

Aiyanna Sanders is from Los Angeles, California and double majored in African American Studies and Political Science. Throughout her time at

Emory, Aiyanna dedicated herself to fighting for underrepresented communities on campus and bridging the gap of access to resources within her community through her involvement as EBSU Senior Staff Administrator, the Black Pre-Law Society President, Emory's Commission on Racial and Social Justice



## *Class of 2019 continued*

Intern, and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.'s second-vice president and treasurer. Aiyanna has been a recipient of numerous awards, including 100 Senior Honorary, 2019 Graduating Women of Excellence, and is a scholarship recipient of both the Rudolph P. Byrd and Dr. Herman L. Reese awards. Her senior honors thesis focused on Anti-Blackness within the United States and Brazil. Aiyanna plans to attend Harvard Law School in the Fall.



### **Paula Camila Quezada – Major**

Paula Quezada was born in Lima, Peru and now resides in Tamarac, Florida. She majored in African American Studies and minored in English. Paula has been dedicated to ensuring equity and inclusivity through different facets of Campus Life. Since her sophomore year, Paula worked as an Intern in the Commission on Racial and Social Justice, and she and a peer co-founded the queer discussion group Queer, Trans\*, Latinx. Paula has dabbled in Orientation Life and finally found home in Residence Life as a Resident Advisor in the URC on Emory's Clairmont Campus. Paula has been recognized as a recipient of the Gay and Lesbian Leadership Award, as well as the Civic Scholars Scholarship. Paula has been celebrated in the 100 Senior Honorary, and has been recognized as a Graduating Woman of Excellence. During her gap year, she will be preparing for the GRE and applying to graduate programs in English.

*The Class of 2019 also includes DeAndre Brown.*



Class of 2019 AAS graduates join in for a photo with alumna Breanna J. McDaniel (09Ox 11C) and her most recent children's publication, *Hands Up!* Clockwise from left: Bobbye Hampton, Christell Roach, Aiyanna Sanders, and Breanna J. McDaniel.

# Events of Interest



Nikole Hannah-Jones

## *Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Observance Keynote*

Speaker: Nikole Hannah-Jones

TUESDAY, JANUARY 21, 2020 AT 4 P.M.

**Location:** Jones Room, 3rd Floor, Woodruff Library

Hannah-Jones covers racial injustice for *The New York Times Magazine*, and has spent years chronicling the way official policy has created—and maintains—racial segregation in housing and schools. She was named a MacArthur Genius Grant Fellow (one of only 24 people chosen, globally) for “reshaping national conversations around education reform” and for her reporting on racial re-segregation in our schools. This is the latest honor in a growing list: she’s won a Peabody, a Polk, and a National Magazine Award for her story on choosing a school for her daughter in a segregated city. She is the editor of the pathbreaking

1619 Project published by *The New York Times*.

## *Women’s History Month Special Reading: Black Women, Black Love*

Speaker: Dr. Dianne Stewart

MONDAY, MARCH 23, 2020 AT 4 P.M.

**Location:** To Be Determined

Stewart is an associate professor of Religion and African American Studies at Emory University specializing in African heritage religious cultures in the Caribbean and the Americas. Inspired by her pedagogical investment in Black Love Studies and her widely celebrated courses, “The Power of Black Self-Love” (co-taught with Dr. Donna Troka) and “Black Love,” Dr. Stewart spent three years research and writing *Black Women, Black Love: America’s War on African American Marriage*, which will be published by Seal Press in 2020.



Dr. Dianne Stewart



Dr. Pearl K. Dowe

## *Grace Towns Hamilton Lecture*

Speaker: Dr. Pearl K. Dowe

TUESDAY, APRIL 7, 2020 AT 4 P.M.

**Location:** To Be Determined

Dowe is the Asa Griggs Candler Professor of Political Science and African American Studies with a joint appointment between the university’s Oxford College and Emory College of Arts and Sciences. Dowe’s most recent research focuses on African American women’s political ambition and public leadership. She has presented widely at professional conferences and given frequent news-media interviews about American political topics. She is a member of several committees for the American Political Science Association. She is co-editor of the *National Review of Black Politics* and is a member of the editorial boards of the *Journal of Economics, Race, and Policy* and the *Race, Gender & Class Journal*.