

# AAS



EMORY  
UNIVERSITY

Department of  
African American Studies

# FALL '24 NEWSLETTER







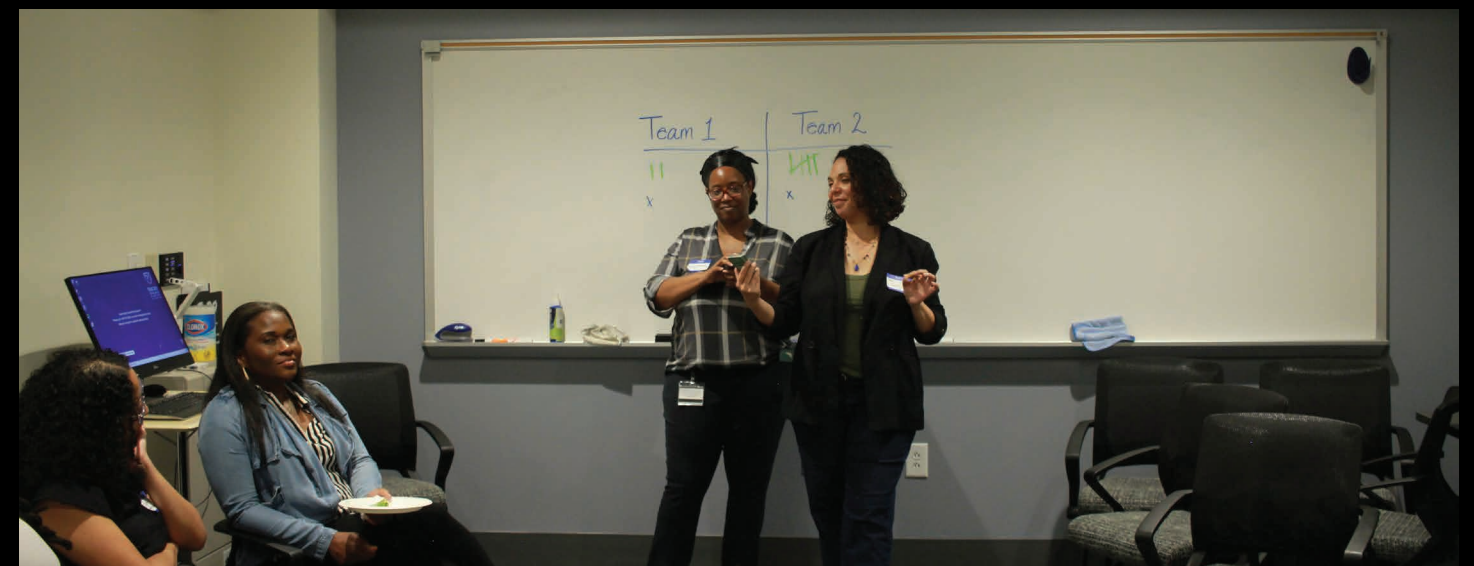
# A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR

DR. KALI GROSS

The day after VP Kamala Harris lost her historic bid for the presidency of the United States, Black students across the country received racist texts deriding them as slaves and demanding that they report for cotton-picking duty. On a Texas campus young men stood with signs calling women property. For those who are unfamiliar with African American and American History, this behavior might come as a shock, but these tactics are rooted in our nation's past. White supremacists have deployed these messages throughout our history to cow Black people and all women to try to assert their notions of what we can and cannot do. Fortunately, our ancestors and their allies have left us with a blueprint for a bevy of strategies that insured our survival, and helped a great many thrive.

The very existence of the Department of African American Studies is a testament to that legacy. So too is the valiant scholarship of our students and faculty who continue to honor our dual mission of academic excellence and service to the community, in every sense—here at Emory, the City of Atlanta, and throughout the African Diaspora. Drs. Carol Anderson and Crystal Sanders investigate the apparatuses of racial tyranny, whether it be racial violence and voter suppression or substandard, segregated schooling. Drs. Bayo Holsey and Walter Rucker will steward study-abroad programs in Ghana, and new faculty hires Drs. Erica Armstrong Dunbar and Bettina Judd use innovative approaches to interdisciplinarity to harness the power of history, art, culture, and creativity in knowledge production.

We are eager to partner with you as we continue to move forward. Welcome.





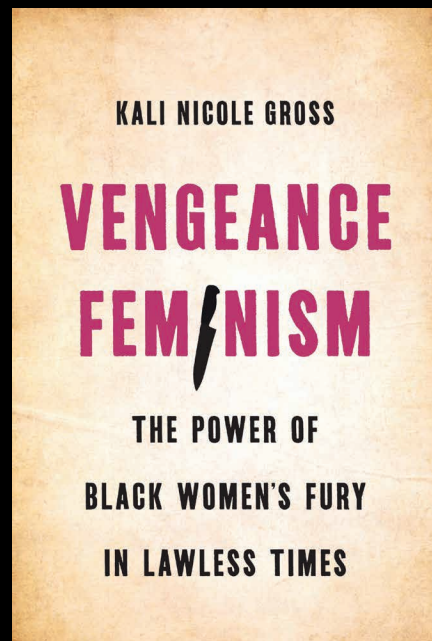


During the fall semester, we were joined by powerhouse scholars, Dr. Bettina Judd and Dr. Erica Dunbar. *The Gilded Age* (released on HBO and streaming on Max), co-executive-produced by Dr. Dunbar, was nominated for six Emmy's for its second season—a feat that should not be understated. Dr. Dunbar has continued her work on the upcoming third season.

Dr. Judd's fall semester included being a guest poet at the Decatur Book Festival, sharing her poetry at Emory's Poetry Stage after an introduction by fellow poet, Emory colleague, and MacArthur "genius" grant winner Dr. Jericho Brown. Dr. Judd delivered a moving selection of poetry, a wail/whale of captivating emotion within a space shared by fellow poets who would share selections of their own works. We can only anticipate the work that Dr. Dunbar and Dr. Judd will continue to do as part of Emory's African American Studies Department.





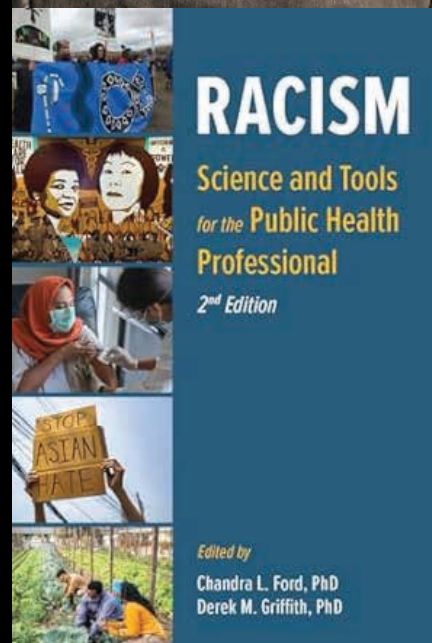
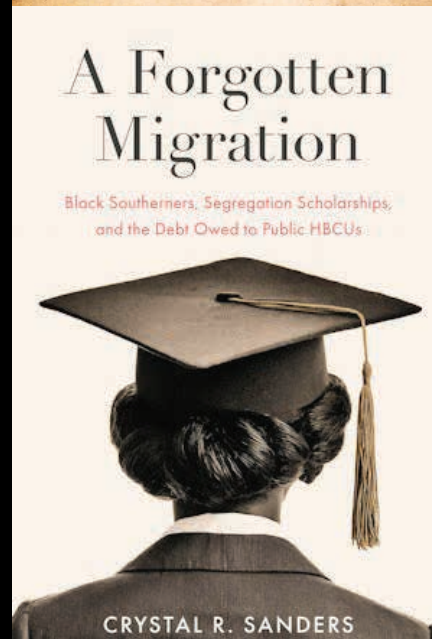


# AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES PUBLICATIONS

As a testament to the scholarship within our department are an array of engaging new publications written by our faculty. Department Chair Dr. Kali Gross's book looks at the methods that Black women historically used to find justice within a repressive legal system. She seeks to provide new narratives by looking at the experiences of Black women who won against that system.

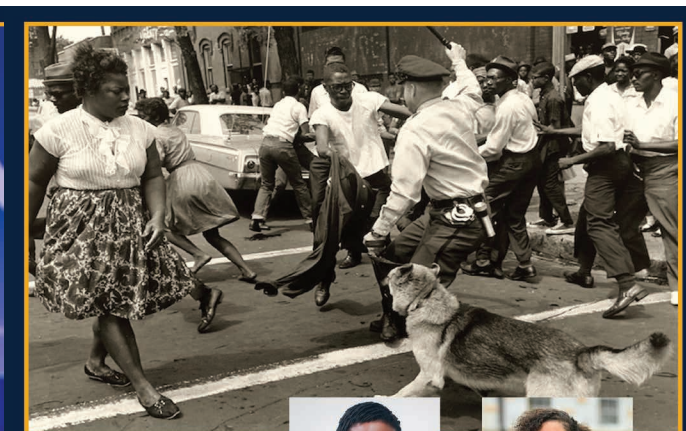
Dr. Crystal Sanders's work explores "segregation scholarships" as higher-education paths to the North, West, and Midwest for Black people living in the American South. The historical lens she uses also lends itself to issues faced in public Black colleges and the legacy of racial inequality in higher education.

The second edition of Dr. Chandra Ford's book, coedited with Dr. Derek Griffith, offers more ways for public health professionals to address the health impacts of racism. Recontextualized in domestic and global events since 2020—the COVID-19 pandemic, the murder of George Floyd, and worldwide movements for racial justice—the book centers marginalized voices and perspectives and roots its methods in science and empathy.



NEW OP-ED BY DR. KALI GROSS

WHY KAMALA HARRIS' PROMISES ON ABORTION MATTER SO MUCH TO BLACK WOMEN



NEW OP-ED BY DR. DIANNE STEWART & DR. KYRAH DANIELS

THIS IS NO ORDINARY ANTI-BLACKNESS — THE RACIST HISTORY OF THE PET-EATING CONSPIRACY



DR. CAROL ANDERSON FEATURED ON DEMOCRACY NOW!



This work spotlights important dynamics from our past and is a vantage point from which to better contextualize our present. We see this in the op-eds and special appearances from our faculty.

Drs. Kyrach Daniels and Dianne Stewart collaborated to speak on the history of antiblack rhetoric that emerged during the recent presidential campaign cycle and the conspiracies undergirding it.

As Vice President Kamala Harris ran, Dr. Kali Gross wrote about what her pledge to sign abortion legislation would mean to Black women.

Dr. Carol Anderson has steadily documented the increasingly fascist and racist rhetoric that epitomized the 2024 election season. She continues to challenge the proliferation of white supremacist rhetoric in mainstream political discourse.



# DR. WALTER RUCKER



## GOODRICH C. WHITE PROFESSOR OF AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES AND HISTORY

This semester, Dr. Walter Rucker was named the Goodrich C. White Professor of African American Studies and History. This title demonstrates his substantial contributions to Emory's mission and his status as an eminent scholar in the field. This is one of the highest honors that Emory can grant a member of its faculty.

# IN HIS OWN WORDS



"It is a deep honor being a recipient of the Goodrich C. White professorship mainly because this appointment was due in part to the continuation of work begun by Professor Rudolph Byrd—a first-rate institution builder and founder of the James Weldon Johnson Institute (JWJI) at Emory—who also held the Goodrich C. White named chair. To be clear, I am no Rudolph Byrd. He not only founded the JWJI, but Professor Byrd also directed the African American Studies program for

9 years and was among the first to envision an African American Studies Ph.D. program at Emory. Though he transitioned in 2011, he remains a key part of a triumvirate of giants, joining Professor Delores Aldridge—the Grace Towns Hamilton Professor Emeritus of Sociology and AAS—and Professor Carol Anderson—the Robert W. Woodruff Professor of AAS—as the builders and sustainers of the AAS enterprise here at Emory."



**"I am proud to be able to contribute to the development of the AAS Ph.D. program and my work to build intellectual networks between scholars and graduate students of color at Emory."**

**-Dr. Walter Rucker**

"My small role in supporting this ongoing enterprise was serving as chair of the AAS Ph.D. Program Proposal Committee (2019–2021), chair of the AAS Ph.D. Program Committee (2021–2022), and the inaugural Director of Graduate Studies and chair of the AAS Graduate Studies Committee (2022–2025). In addition, I served as the co-PI of a \$225,000 Mellon Sawyer Seminar Grant, which funded a yearlong series of workshops and invited lectures entitled "Visions of Slavery: Histories, Memories, and Mobilizations of Unfreedom

in the Black Atlantic" (2021–2024) culminating in an April 2024 conference planned by our first cohort of AAS Ph.D. students. I am proud to be able to contribute to the development of the AAS Ph.D. program and my work to build intellectual networks between scholars and graduate students of color at Emory. However, none of my work would be possible without the visionaries, architects, and builders who came long before me and who made possible Emory's AAS enterprise."



# WHY DEMOCRACY IS IN DANGER

Hosted by the Fox Center, Harvard Professor Steven Levitsky graced Ackerman Hall in the Carlos Museum and spoke about the reality of our democracy, contextualized by the reality of the Electoral College and its impacts on electoral politics.

After delivering an informative and sobering keynote address, Dr. Carol Anderson sat down with him to discuss his recent co-authored publication, *Tyranny of the Minority*, and question what the path forward looked like under our political climate and the obstacle of the Electoral College and other features, like the filibuster, that give disproportionate weight and power to the numerical minority.







## The Radical Imagination of Black Women

Dr. Pearl Dowe graced the Emory campus with two talks on her book and its relevancy in themes and exploration of the current moment for Black women politicians.

The first event was put on by the college in the Goizueta Business School as Dr. Dowe spoke about Black women who became part of history by working to organize votes and donations for Vice President Harris's 2024 bid for the presidency.





# THE FIGHT TO VOTE:

THE PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE OF VOTING RIGHTS IN AMERICA

On October 23, The Fox Center hosted an event that featured two panels, the first with Dr. Carol Anderson, Dr. Bernard Fraga, and Dr. Alan Abramowitz, moderated by *The Guardian's* Sam Levine and introduced by *The Guardian's* Kira Lerner. The panel explored the concerns around this current election cycle with a clear focus on the challenges posed

by the Electoral College. The panelists looked at potential outcomes for the 2024 election and the tactics being used by both parties in their bids for political power. The second panel was a one-on-one conversation between *The Guardian's* George Chidi and guest panelist Cliff Albright regarding Black voters in this election cycle specifically, and what it

has been like to mobilize them amid an intense election cycle. They spoke about the heaviness of the season and what that means for voter engagement as well as what it looks like to reengage people.





# RADICAL IMAGINATION AFTER THE ELECTION

The last time Dr. Pearl Dowe spoke about her book and the politics, ambition, and power of Black women, she explored how that coalesced in Harris's campaign run and contextualized that with the political ambitions of other Black women who made this run a possibility.

On November 5, the outcome of the 2024 presidential election was different than many had hoped or imagined and the effect on many Black women voters was profound. Dr. Chandra Ford held a conversation with Dr. Dowe about her book in the aftermath of the election, as Dr. Dowe began to imagine new institutions and importantly, she helped the room imagine a path forward.

