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### ***CRE Hosts 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Faculty Forum on Race and Ethnicity***

The 6<sup>th</sup> annual Faculty Forum on Race and Ethnicity took place on September 23<sup>rd</sup> 2011. The event marked the inauguration of the 2011-2012 calendar of events. Shaped by the CRE's ongoing commitment to showcasing work on race and ethnicity by Rutgers faculty, the one-day conference brought together scholars with an interest in these subjects to discuss their common research themes in a series of panels organized around topics of *education, forms of expression, politics and policy*.

The forum featured the work of a number of outstanding scholars, including several Postdoctoral Fellows, from Anthropology, Women's and Gender Studies, Political Science, Africana Studies, the Center for Middle Eastern Studies, the Graduate School of Education, and the Rutgers Center for Historical Analysis. Though the scholarly approaches of the forum's speakers varied in topic, scope, and method, some common themes emerged. Many of these cutting-edge scholars seek to recover the experiences and ideas of minority group members by exploring the spaces in which the voices of members of non-dominant groups can be heard, and challenging categories and master narratives through which members of such groups are silenced. Taken together, their projects exemplify how new work on race, ethnicity and gender disrupts established disciplinary boundaries and approaches by creating new questions and inspiring methodological innovations.



*Participants at the CRE's 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Faculty Forum on Race and Ethnicity (L-R: Brittney Cooper, Margarita Huyhua, Sbatema Threadcraft, Caroline Wigginton, Tami Navarro)*

**Ann-Marie Adams** (RCHA), **Caroline Wigginton** (American Studies/W&GS), and **Brittney Cooper**, (a Ford Postdoctoral Fellow at the CRE), for example, rewrite established historical narratives by recovering the neglected voices of women of color. Cooper’s work reconfigures traditional understandings of the category of the intellectual in order to talk about black women’s intellectual work. Whereas most intellectual historians focus on white male thinkers, Cooper contends that the African American women who vied for race leadership in the 1890s were black female intellectuals, whose distinctive world view challenged their contemporaries’ attempts to see academic work as disembodied.

Black women never embraced the ideal of a life of the mind, Cooper notes. Instead, most were all too aware that their bodies were always being read and choose to exploit that visibility in advancing their intellectual aims. Wigginton found that in studying colonial texts written by women of all races, the method of distribution was as important as the content. Wigginton claims that women were, “capitalizing on the materiality of texts... they described how they wanted public life to be and enacted that community in how they circulated the texts.”

Adams questions why we know so much about Prudence Crandall—the New England schoolteacher who made waves when she admitted a black student to attend her private school for girls in the 1830s—but little about Sarah Harris, the black student who

actively sought to improve the quality of her education, by attending Crandall’s school. Although it was Sarah Harris’ initiative that led to the standoff, it is Crandall’s story that has been written into the narrative of struggles for desegregation in the United States. But it is Harris’s story that is central to the understanding of race and education, serving as legal precedent for a number of 20<sup>th</sup> century school desegregation cases, including *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) and *Sheff v. O’Neill* (1996). Adams, therefore, seeks to “excavate the story of Sarah Harris from the margins of the Prudence Crandall story.” Similarly, **Shatema Threadcraft** of the Political Science Department spoke about how the subordination of the intimate sphere to the public political sphere in Western thought marginalizes the experiences of black women, especially when it comes to understanding their intimate relationships, reproductive labor and vulnerability to sexual violence.

Several scholars framed their discussions around the ways that language and translation configure dominant and subordinate groups. In presenting her research on Indian poetry **Anjali Nerlekar**, Assistant Professor of African, Middle Eastern and South Asian Languages and Literatures, emphasized the ways



L-R: *Louisa Schein, Fakhri Haghani, Anjali Nerlekar, Keisha Green*

in which mono-lingual literatures are privileged in a multi-lingual India. Likewise, **Margarita Huayhua**, a Presidential Postdoctoral Fellow, and **Scott Matter**, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Postdoctoral Fellow, both examined how everyday interactions among different populations render certain linguistic voices as legitimate and others as illegitimate.

Both Huayhua’s work on the denigration of Quechua speakers in Peru and Matter’s on the reinvention and reproduction of ethnic divisions in Kenya among the Dorobo, Maasai and Kikuyu, demonstrate that narratives of nation and identity are often used to silence inconvenient counter-narratives. In Peru, where indigenous culture and language are written into the narrative of nation as elements of the past, “speaking an indigenous language in a government office elicits silence as workers tell you with their eyes that you should go.”

As Huayhua asserts, the material disadvantages of speaking an indigenous language are clear and immediate. All three speakers illuminate the material consequences of the hierarchies created by language, exploring how competing languages can create obstacles for

speakers from subordinate groups, curtailing their forms of self-expression and muting their political struggles.

Presidential Postdoctoral Fellows **Tami Navarro**, an anthropologist, and **Yveline Alexis** of Africana Studies, gave presentations that underscored the ways in which systems of domination and subordination persist in a global/transnational context. Focused on the U.S. Virgin Islands, Navarro's work considers how the island's communities were transformed by the arrival of a community of global elites, who moved to the Virgin Islands to take advantage of the generous tax breaks offered foreign companies by the islands' Economic Development Commission. Popularly known as the 'EDC' people, these wealthy white employees have created a shift in the racial hierarchies of islands like St. Croix. The new hierarchy complicates the existing patron/client relationships between middle and upper class 'white' residents and the island's black majority.

Navarro's contemporary perspective is balanced by the historical work of Alexis, who looks at Haiti's occupation by the US in the early twentieth century. Alexis examines how narratives of resistance from the Haitian people at that time have been de-legitimized in the dominant historical narrative as disorder, illiteracy and chaos without purpose. Both scholars examine how shifts of global capital have drawn the attention of powerful, elite classes to otherwise ignored nations. Their scholarship exposes the resentments of the local



*Yveline Alexis*

population and helps to recover their acts of resistance.

**Peter Guarnaccia's** presentation examined the consequences engendered by these same flows of global capital in his study of immigrant acculturation in the United States. By studying the experiences of young immigrants as they move between the cultural world of their parents' homes and educational settings outside their own communities, Guarnaccia illuminates the very different cultural and linguistic environments these immigrants navigate as they travel back and forth between the two. "Stepping through the front door can be like stepping out of the United States and into a foreign country," says Guarnaccia. The resources available to young immigrants on both sides of that door profoundly affect the process of acculturation. By attempting to identify the elements of successful acculturation, Guarnaccia hopes to produce research that can help direct immigration policies in the US.

Several speakers examined the forms of expression available to

marginalized communities. **Fakhri Haghani**, Assistant Professor at the Center for Middle Eastern Studies, **Louisa Schein**, Associate Professor in Anthropology and Women's and Gender Studies, and **Keisha Green**, Presidential Postdoctoral Fellow in the Graduate School of Education, all explore the relationship between underrepresented communities and the media.

Haghani presented a gendered and raced analysis of the benefits and limitations of social media in the revolutionary context. She addressed the U.S. and European corporate media's representation of the Arab Spring as a mere product of the impact of social media in the region and their selective and one-dimensional representation of the revolutionaries' use of social media. Green explored literacy and learning processes outside of the classroom setting by examining the experiences of a group of Atlanta high school students who produce a live 30-minute public affairs broadcast for a local community-based radio station. There, they found opportunities to engage in community action and acquire new skills by designing and broadcasting radio shows.

While work in radio was rewarding for these urban youngsters, Professor Schein describes her experiences with mainstream movie making about the Hmong community as largely negative. Hired as a consultant and media liaison for the Hmong actors chosen to star in the Clint Eastwood vehicle *Gran Torino*, Schein was frustrated by the ways in which the filmmaking process, from scripting to directing to marketing, reinforced negative stereotypes of

Hmong immigrants, and recreated a paternalistic narrative of the white man's burden that effectively silenced Hmong communities. Initially excited about the film, the pressing question for the Hmong community now is, as Schein puts it, "is visibility worth it even if it is bad visibility?"

Among the speakers who discussed how work on race, ethnicity and gender can shake up disciplinary and professional categories was ACLS New Faculty Fellow and Postdoctoral Associate in Women's and Gender Studies, **Kyla Schuller**. Schuller's work crosses several disciplines in documenting how 19<sup>th</sup> century sentimental discourses in social reform, scientific thought and literary production shaped constructions of race, gender and sexuality. Working across these disciplines allows her to examine how notions of evolution, race and heredity contributed to the trope of the orphan and contributed to practices of re-appropriating Irish children as "orphans" to Midwestern farm families.

While embracing wide-ranging scholarship, some of the Forum's speakers noted that professional categorizations can subordinate certain kinds of critical work. Schein, in particular, maintained that her work has inspired her to question the segregation of scholarly work and academic service. Having dedicated much of her time to creating physical spaces for constructive learning about media representation and the Hmong community, she suggests that activist

work of this kind goes largely unrecognized in the academy, and should receive professional recognition alongside traditional forms of scholarship such as writing and publishing.

**Dan Battey**, Assistant Professor at the Graduate School of Education, highlighted other challenges faced by scholars whose work focuses on race and social difference by discussing the difficulties he faces in publishing scholarship on racialized interactions in elementary math classrooms in traditional math education journals. "In a field largely regarded as cultureless and neutral," says Battey, "studying the math classroom as a racialized space is two or three steps beyond where the discipline is now."



*ACLS New Faculty Fellow Kyla Schuller talks informally with CRE Director Mia Bay during lunch at the Faculty Forum*

The Center for Race and Ethnicity welcomes the disciplinary challenges posed by new scholarship on race and ethnicity, and aims to create spaces for the promotion and discussion of such work. The Faculty Forum is designed to be one such space. An annual event, the Forum also aims to create new communities of knowledge at Rutgers by bringing faculty from different

departments into conversation with one another. Each year our faculty forums foster rich interdisciplinary discussions and highlight the common threads running through a variety of very different faculty projects. So too, does the Center for Race and Ethnicity's upcoming programming for 2011-2012, which provides ongoing opportunities for interdisciplinary discussions of scholarship on race and ethnicity by Rutgers Faculty; and offers roundtables, screenings and other events designed to promote such discussions among Rutgers students.

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## ***Introducing Brittney Cooper, 2011-2012 Ford Foundation Postdoctoral Fellow at the CRE***



The Center for Race and Ethnicity is pleased to welcome Brittney Cooper as a Ford Foundation Post doctoral Fellow during the 2011-12 academic year. Dr. Cooper is on leave from her position as assistant professor of gender and race studies at the University of Alabama, where she teaches courses in Black feminism, African American intellectual history, and Hip Hop Studies. Cooper is also co-founder of the [Crunk Feminist Collective](#)—a scholar-activist blog to which she makes regular contributions. She is at work on her first book project,

*Race Women: Gender and the Making of a Black Public Intellectual Tradition, 1831-Present.* Cooper is an active participant in CRE activities, and is helping to shape the events of the year. Cooper noted, "I am excited to be a part of the robust community of scholars that Mia Bay has convened here at the Center for Race and Ethnicity. I'm a great admirer of Mia's work, so I'm psyched to be working with her. The weekly working group is a model of intellectual exchange and generosity that helps me to be productive, and allows me to become a better, more intentional colleague to others. I'm also especially glad that the Center enthusiastically embraces and promotes interdisciplinary approaches to scholarship in ways that bring together all the amazing scholars in the Rutgers community and beyond. If my first few months here at the Center are any indication, I anticipate that this will be a wonderfully productive and generative year, and I consider it a tremendous honor to be part of the Rutgers CRE family." Welcome, Brittney!

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## ***Meet Our New Graduate Assistants!***

The CRE is pleased to welcome its new cohort of graduate assistants for the 2011-12 academic year. These students assist in all aspects of the Center's work, including researching and writing newsletters, staffing events, and shaping its ongoing work, while at the same time preparing their own

work on dissertations and other materials.



**Isra Ali** is a doctoral candidate in Journalism and Media Studies at the School of Communication and Information. Her research explores how North American and Western European women, functioning as reporters, commentators, experts and mediators, utilize print, television, online and documentary media platforms to participate in public discourse on gender and sexuality in the context of the "war on terror," primarily around the discussion of the liberation of Muslim women. She has presented her work at national and international conferences and was selected to participate in the 2011 National Communication Association Doctoral Honors Seminar. In 2009 she was the recipient of the Louis Bevier Dissertation Fellowship. Most recently, she published a chapter "Reflecting the Punch Line: Muslim Men, White Women and the "War on Terror" in American Television Comedy" in *Islam in its International Context: Comparative Perspectives* and in the *Encyclopedia of Gender and Media*.



**Jahaira Arias** is a sixth year doctoral student in the department of History. She specializes in the history of Latin America and is interested in the politics of race, nation, region and gender in the Caribbean. Her dissertation focuses on the political culture of the Dominican Republic in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the ways in which discourses of race, region and gender were woven into nationalist politics in a neo-colonial context.



**Christopher Hayes** is a seventh-year Ph.D. candidate with the History department. His dissertation, *Police, Poverty and Resistance: The Harlem and Bedford-Stuyvesant Uprisings, July 1964*, uses those events as a focal point to demonstrate the successes and failures of the northern civil rights movement in a time of national progress. While black New Yorkers had made a distinct, vigorous civil rights movement dating back to World War II, the liberal municipal administrations during the following two decades and beyond proved to be deeply frustrating partners moving at a glacial pace. Christopher's work contributes to the historiographical redefinition of the national civil rights

movement, demonstrating that it did not solely emerge from the south in the 1950's and that African Americans in different regions of the country had different goals, while also offering a deeper understanding of what liberalism meant to civil rights.



**Shatima J. Jones** is a fifth year graduate student in the Sociology Department of Rutgers University. She is currently conducting ethnographic research in a black barbershop to question the existence of a "black community" and to examine how feelings of racial solidarity are achieved, or not, in everyday life.



**Wendy Wright** is a 6th year doctoral student in the Department of Political Science, studying political theory and public law. Her dissertation focuses on the role of punishment in creating, maintaining and legitimating a racial order in the United States. Her general research interests include critical

theory, relations between theory and policy, and law and society.



## ***CRE Plans Roundtable on Race and the Right Wing***

Please be sure to join the Center for Race and Ethnicity later this month for an informal roundtable discussion on Race, Ethnicity and the Right Wing. Featuring scholars from American Studies, History and Africana Studies, this panel will look at the roles race and ethnicity play in right-wing politics, as well as how they are mobilized by the right.

Speakers include:

**Kathleen Belew**,  
History/Rutgers Center for  
Historical Analysis

**Jefferson Decker**, American  
Studies/Political Science

**Ann Fabian**, History/American  
Studies

**Louis Prisock**, Africana  
Studies/American Studies

The event will be held on Tuesday, November 15, 2011 at 1:30pm at the CRE offices, 191 College Avenue, 1st Floor, College Avenue Campus. See the [flyer](#) for additional information. A light lunch will be served, so the courtesy of an RSVP is requested to the CRE at [raceethnicity@sas.rutgers.edu](mailto:raceethnicity@sas.rutgers.edu).

## ***CRE Unveils New Website***

This summer, CRE staff were busy learning new programs and migrating content for the new and improved CRE website, and we are pleased to report that it looks beautiful! The CRE website still contains information on our upcoming events, as well as lists of our affiliated faculty and archives of our previous events, as it always has. What's new is that the content is easier to manage, making updates quick and easy for the full staff. There are also places to sign on to our mailing list, and engage with social media through links to the CRE's Facebook page and Twitter feed. In the coming weeks, we plan to upload video footage as well. We are very pleased with our new web

presence! Check it out at  
<http://raceethnicity.rutgers.edu>.

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## ***CRE Announces Sawyer Seminar on Race, Place and Space in the Americas***

The Center for Race and Ethnicity is pleased to announce the receipt of a Sawyer Seminar grant entitled “Race, Place and Space in the Americas.” The grant, in the amount of \$175,000, will fund a year-long seminar during the 2012-13 academic year. Scholars from a variety of institutions will be able to come together for lectures, conferences and other events related to the seminar, which, among other things, will look at how location shapes ideas of race, and vice versa. Please see a recent article in [Rutgers Today](#) for more information about this program.

The prestigious Sawyer Seminar program is funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and seeks to create temporary research centers at large research universities. Rutgers has been invited to submit proposals in the past, but this is the first one that has been accepted. Congratulations to Professors Mia Bay and Ann Fabian for this prestigious honor!

### The Center for Race and Ethnicity

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