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*Exciting Fall Events at the CRE*



THE RUTGERS CENTER FOR RACE AND ETHNICITY'S ANDREW W. MELLON FOUNDATION SAWYER SEMINAR ON THE COMPARATIVE STUDY OF CULTURES

RACE SPACE & PLACE in the Americas

CO-DIRECTED BY MIA BAY AND ANN FABIAN

The seminars take place at 1-2:30pm in the Rutgers Center for Race and Ethnicity at 191 College Ave; conference information will be posted in the near future. Conference and seminar meetings are free and open to the public.

FALL 2012 SCALE & RACIAL GEOGRAPHIES

Seminar meetings: September 12  
September 26  
October 10  
October 24  
Conference: October 25-26, 2012

BORDERS & BELONGING

Seminar meetings: October 31  
November 14  
November 28  
December 5  
Conference: December 6-7, 2012

SPRING 2013 RACE, SPACE & NATURE

Seminar meetings: January 24  
February 6  
February 20  
March 6  
Conference: March 7-8, 2013

CITIES, TOWNS & SUBURBS

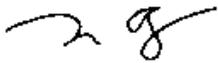
Seminar meetings: March 27  
April 10  
April 24  
May 1  
Conference: May 2-3, 2013

**LETTER FROM THE DIRECTORS**

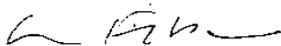
2012-13 promises to be a rich and eventful year at the Center for Race and Ethnicity. In addition to hosting a very successful faculty forum last month (see below), the CRE is currently home to a year-long seminar on Race, Space and Place in the Americas, led by the CRE Director, Mía Bay, and Associate Director, Ann Fabian. Other regular participants in the Seminar include an interdisciplinary group of faculty affiliates from New Brunswick, Newark and Camden, the CRE's Sawyer Seminar Postdoctoral Fellow Roosbelinda Cardenas, and the CRE's new cohort of graduate assistants. Please see page 6 to get acquainted with this year's Graduate Assistants, and page 7 to learn more about our distinguished postdoctoral fellow. Be sure to visit the CRE's website at <http://raceethnicity.rutgers.edu> for a full schedule of Sawyer Seminars featured speakers and events.

Please also plan to attend some of the Sawyer Seminar meetings and conferences to learn more about this exciting program. Funded with a grant from Andrew W. Mellon Foundation's John Sawyer Seminars Program, the seminar explores the interplay of social, historical, and spatial forces in configuring racial formations, identities, and experiences in the Americas. Its thematic concerns are shaped by recent works in geography and history—as

well as urban studies, critical race theory, and ethnic studies—that underscore the importance of space and place to constructions of race and ethnicity. The seminar consists of a series of meetings and conferences organized around the themes Scale and Racial Geographies, Borders and Belongings, Race, Place and Nature, and Cities, Towns, and Suburbs. The seminar dedicates four bi-weekly works in progress meetings and a conference to each theme, all of which will showcase the work a variety of talented scholars from Rutgers and beyond.



Mia Bay, CRE Director



Ann Fabian, CRE Associate Director

## CRE SPONSORS 7<sup>TH</sup> FACULTY FORUM ON RACE AND ETHNICITY

The CRE’s 2012-2013 calendar of events began on October 5 with our 7<sup>th</sup> annual Faculty Forum on Race and Ethnicity. Like previous faculty forums, this one-day conference brought together Rutgers-affiliated scholars with an interest in race and ethnicity to discuss their research. Participants included professors and postdoctoral fellows from several departments throughout the entire Rutgers system, including: the School of Criminal Justice, Graduate School of Education, English, History,

the Institute on Ethnicity, Culture and the Modern Experience, the Institute for Research on Women, Italian, and Women’s and Gender Studies. The forum showcased the many common interests that these scholars share in an interdisciplinary series of panels framed around issues of diaspora, material objects, and the state.

The panels highlighted their participants’ different thematic concerns and investigative approaches, while also revealing their shared commitment to using analytical frameworks that stress race and ethnicity to uncover the voices and experiences of members of socially marginalized groups. Taken together, the panels spoke to how race, ethnicity, class, and gender complicate mainstream narratives of power and challenge the disciplinary boundaries of the academy.

The first panel of the day, “Diasporic Identities,” highlighted transnational approaches to questions of race and ethnicity. Professor Michelle Stephens (Department of English, Rutgers-NB) opened the conversation

with a provocative call for ‘archipelagic thinking’ in Caribbean and American Studies.

Stephens argued that the cultural diversity of the Caribbean is a problem for ‘area studies’ models that understand areas as defined by a common culture. Instead, she suggested that Caribbean Studies might benefit from a “terraqueous” approach that takes into account the peculiar ways land and water have shaped the history of the Caribbean. This framework would move scholars away from their continental biases by placing the Caribbean in the center with continents surrounding it and by contrasting archipelagic ways of thinking with their continental counterparts. According to Stephens, this approach takes into account the diversity of the Caribbean and offers an alternative approach to area studies that might be useful in American Studies as well. Stephens noted, “What would it mean to think about the United States itself as defined by and constructing a continental identity? Certain parts of the United States could also be archipelagic if we push the construct.”

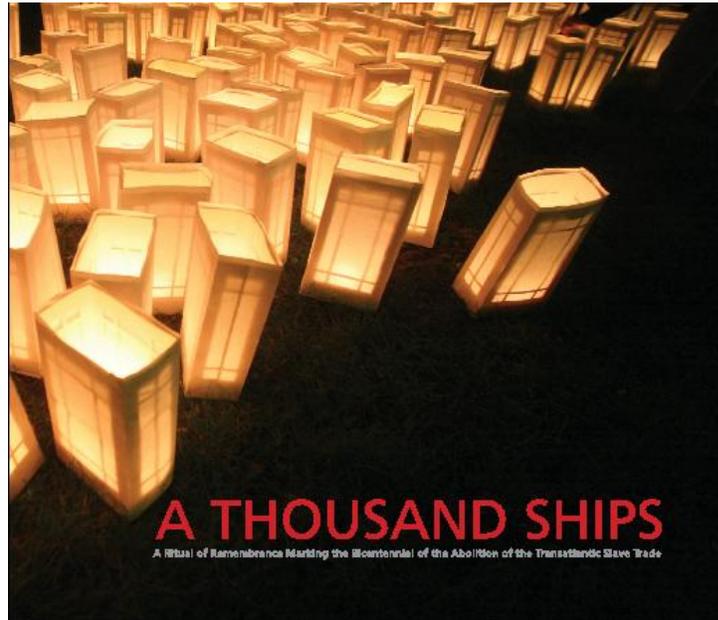
Lyra Monteiro (History & American Studies/Institute on Ethnicity, Culture and the Modern Experience, Rutgers-



Panel 1: Diasporic Identities (L-R: Michelle Stephens, Lyra Monteiro, Sylvia Chan-Malik, Ikuko Asaka)

Newark) presented her work on commemoration of the transatlantic slave trade. The haunted history of the slave trade, she suggested, should be the stuff of a public history designed “to undermine entitlement and hegemony.” To this end, she talked about her involvement in two major public history projects about the transatlantic slave trade. An advisor to the “Slavery and Freedom” exhibition at the National Museum of African American History and Culture, slated to open in 2015, she described the challenges facing that exhibit, before going on to recount the public “rituals of remembrance” that marked the 2008 bicentennial of the abolition of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade in Providence, Rhode Island. These rituals, which Monteiro helped organize, included a broadcast of Paul Robeson’s recording of “Amazing Grace,” readings from documents concerning the slave trade in Providence, and a “Waterfire” art installation designed to remember the slave ships that once traveled from Rhode Island to Africa. This last one involved lighting bonfires along the city’s river, and organizing volunteers to pour bottles of water into the river in a mass libation. More information on this event can be found in Lyra Monteiro and Andres Losowsky’s online book *A Thousand Ships: A Ritual of Remembrance Marking the Bicentennial of the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (<http://www.themuseumonline.com/book>.)

Sylvia Chan-Malik (Women’s and Gender Studies, Rutgers-NB)



Online Book Cover of *A Thousand Ships: A Ritual of Remembrance Marking the Bicentennial of the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade*

discussed her book project on Islam in the United States, which spans from a 1958 CBS News documentary on the Nation of Islam to the 2010 controversy over building a mosque near the World Trade Center site. Chan-Malik argues that during the second half of the twentieth century “the image of the Muslim in the United States has undergone transformation,” as have U.S. Muslim communities. Citing the African-American roots of U.S. Muslim culture, Chan-Malik stated her research highlights “the foundational blackness of Islam’s presence in the United States” by analyzing works like James Baldwin’s essays in *The Fire Next Time*, which reveal how “Islam becomes the troubled and fraught space of salvation” for African-Americans.

Ikuko Asaka (Women’s and Gender Studies, Rutgers-NB) spoke about her work on race, gender, and tropicity. Asaka’s research underscores the importance of geography to racial thought by tracing the transnational history of efforts to relocate freed black populations to tropical locations such as Liberia and the Caribbean. According to Asaka, “The association of black free labor with tropical locations shows how, in the nineteenth century, freedom operated as a geographic concept.”

For proponents of emigration, finding an environment that fostered black domesticity was key. Both the United States and Canada were seen as “an infertile ground for black family life,” whereas locations such as Liberia and the Caribbean were seen as ideal for “the flourishing of black family life under a hot sun.” These ideas, however popular among whites, were denounced by many African-Americans. This history, in the

words of Asaka, “suggests a series of emancipations where new realities of geographic expansion, demographic composition and migrations gave human bodies new functions and possibilities.”

The second panel, “Objects and Identity,” inspired a lively discussion about race, ethnicity, and belonging. Nadia Guessous (Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow, Department of Women’s and Gender Studies/Institute for Research on Women, Rutgers-NB), an anthropologist by training, presented on the relationship between leftist feminism and women who wear the *hijab* (modern headscarf associated with the Islamic Revival) in contemporary Morocco. Guessous first traced the history of the leftist feminist movement in Morocco, noting that it was formed in the 1960s and 1970s out of a sense of disenchantment with the gender politics of the New Left. Like feminist movements elsewhere, Moroccan leftist feminists sought to create an inclusive movement that would transcend the tutelage of male-dominated political parties and would be open to women of all backgrounds. Since then, Guessous went on to note, these organizations have had to rethink some of the normative assumptions about modernity, religion and secularism that underlie their move-

ment, as more and more young university-educated and professional women have embraced the ethos and teachings of the Islamic Revival. Although eager to appeal to young Moroccan women, founding members of leftist feminist organizations have felt deeply uncomfortable with the increasing visibility of public religiosity in Moroccan society and have closed their organizations to women who wear the *hijab*. Their actions, according to Guessous, reflect some of the limits of universalist conceptions of secular modernity and the visceral nature of feminist politics. The result is an exclusionary politics of avoidance that prevents intergenerational exchanges and inhibits the development of a truly inclusive feminist movement in Morocco.

Petra Robinson (Graduate School of Education, Rutgers-NB) shared with the audience her “intellectual passion” for the study of colorism and shadism. Her research focuses on skin bleaching, or the chemical removing of melanin from the skin in Jamaica, where this practice is increasingly popular.

Although Robinson contends that

skin bleaching in Jamaica is not about looking white, but about differentiating between light and dark skin, she sees skin bleaching as a valorization of European aesthetics. She goes on to highlight the class and gender issues associated with the process. For example, she noted “men who bleach their skin run the risk of being thought of as homosexual, a particularly troubling accusation in homophobic Jamaica.” Her work also explores educational campaigns to inform Jamaicans about the health risks associated with skin bleaching. Robinson intends to pursue this theme with a new project that focuses on colorism around college campuses.

Roosbelinda Cárdenas’ (Sawyer Seminar Postdoctoral Associate, CRE, Rutgers-NB) presentation focused on her research into the impact of a 1993 Colombian law that reallocated land to “Black Communities,” primarily in the nation’s Pacific basin. Throughout Latin America, this law was viewed as “a poster child for multiculturalism.” However, by the end of the decade, violence threatened many of the collective titles to the land, and displaced many of the region’s black communities. Cárdenas contended that the mobilization and reconfiguration of black ethnic identity that has taken place in Columbia since 1993 has taken three major forms, which include the adoption of global African diasporic discourses of anti-racism, where race, and not just ethnicity, is a category of analysis; the emergence of a politics of victimization that draws strong correlations between blackness and vulnerability; and the



Panel 2: *Objects and Identity* (L-R: Nadia Guessous, Petra Robinson, Roosbelinda Cárdenas)

mobilization of practices of territoriality when agrarian practices are under threat.

The third panel of the day, “Race, Ethnicity, and the State,” featured researchers working from a wide range of perspectives who share a common interest in the work that the state has done and is doing in constructing inequality through a lens of race and ethnicity. Rachel Devlin, Associate Professor of History kicked off the panel with a discussion of her current project, titled “Girls on the Front Line: Gender and the Battle to Desegregate Public Schools in the United States.” In her new study of desegregation, Devlin underscores that the first students to desegregate white schools were usually young black girls. Departing from the dominant historical narrative of the NAACP as the primary actor in school desegregation, Devlin’s work emphasizes the agency and experiences of these girls, while also exploring why these particular girls were chosen to lead the desegregation struggle. One theme that has emerged out of Devlin’s research is that many of these pioneers are notable for carrying themselves “with poise and grace, even a kind of diffidence.” Accordingly, she is also exploring the idea that the girls in desegregation’s vanguard may have possessed particular personality traits, both as individuals and as a consequence of their gendered upbringing, which allowed them to negotiate the complex social arena of the newly desegregated school.

Chantal Francois brought the conver-



*Central High School, Little Rock, Arkansas, 1957, African American students arriving in U.S. Army car (<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/98502283/>)*

sation about education into the contemporary moment. With her discussion of the “Critical Academic Press And Social Support For Literacy at an Urban Public Secondary School,” Francois, a researcher at the Graduate School of Education, also aims to disrupt a conventional narrative, one associated with the persistent theme of failures of literacy among inner city students. Instead, her work focuses on identifying what makes a “culture of literacy” successful, working primarily in New York City schools with successful literacy programs. Francois’ research aims to identify the cultural and social factors contributing to these schools’ successes. Her findings suggest that current trends toward quantifiable methods of instruction may well neglect some most important and effective educational practices seen at work in these schools. They include an emphasis on creating strong bonds between teachers and their student, or the ideas that

“instruction has to come with connection,” and that success emerges when “teachers and students [are] working in solidarity.”



*Shenique Thomas*

Shenique Thomas, from the School of Criminal Justice in Newark, shared her exploratory work, “The Extensive Reach of Outstanding Warrants in New Jersey.” Thomas, who situates her work within a broader body of research on the effects of incarceration on individuals and families, examines the impact of outstanding warrants on the day to day lives of thousands of NJ residents who live under the shadow of such warrants. She contends that even if they escape detention, individuals with outstanding warrants live with “a fugitivity” that affects all areas of their lives, including

family relations, housing, healthcare, and education. Building on the ethnographic work of sociologist, Alice Goffman, Thomas approaches this study from a perspective that includes state and national issues, with an eye toward developing policy recommendations.

Kendra Moore's (Race and Gender Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of History) historical work, "From 'Fiends' to 'Ladies': Race, Gender and Crime in the Arizona Territory," also looks at the ways that local governments are empowered to shape their citizens' identities and how those identities then fit into state-building through her work on women's imprisonment in the Arizona territory from 1848 to 1912. By looking at the multiple legal orders at play in this jurisdiction, which for a time saw Mexican, indigenous, Spanish, and American authorities competing for local power, Moore traces the ascension of white European-American officials to cultural and political power. Even though they themselves were recent immigrants to the Arizona territory, Moore notes, European-American settlers made their claims to the region through a discourse of rightful inheritance.

Rhiannon Welch, Assistant Professor of Italian, continued this discussion of state-building through a racialized identity with her work, "Vital Subjects. Race, (Re)productivity, and Italian Modernity." In her book, Welch situates turn-of-the-20<sup>th</sup>-century race thinking in Italy within the realm of biopolitics. Welch argues that Italy's

emergence as a modern state in the second half of the nineteenth century was closely entwined with a set of ideas about colonialism and the "making" of Italians as modern political subjects. A new Italy emerged within a rhetoric about Italian emigration to the Americas as a hemorrhaging of



*Rhiannon Welch and Chantal Francois*

the Italian lifeblood. Italy's colonization of Eritria was seen as the antidote to the bleeding—an imperial move aimed more at "making" Italians than dominating colonized others.

The conversations generated by the Faculty Forum underscored the myriad ways in which race and ethnicity can enhance our understanding of the power dynamics of the past and present. The CRE hopes to revisit several of the themes discussed at its events throughout the year, including the conferences and works-in-progress series associated with the Sawyer Seminar on Race, Space, and Place in the Americas.

## ***CRE Welcomes New Graduate Assistants***

The Center for Race and Ethnicity is very pleased to welcome a new cohort of graduate assistants for the 2012-13 academic year. Coming from a variety of departments and disciplines, these scholars are responsible for much of the work that goes on at the Center, from writing newsletters, to editing manuscripts and staffing events. Be sure to look for these friendly faces at your next CRE event!



*2012-13 Graduate Assistants (L-R: Stephen Allen, Ashley Falzetti, Kartikeya Saboo, Jahaira Arias, Wendy Wright)*

**Stephen Allen** is a sixth year PhD candidate in the Department of History at Rutgers University focusing on Latin American and Global/



Comparative History. His dissertation, which he recently finished, and will defend in November, examines how the performances of boxers in and out of

the ring allowed Mexicans to project a virile and modern image of their nation in the mid to late twentieth century. His research interests include the relation-

ship between modernity and nationalism, the role of sport in culture and society, and the construction of racial, ethnic, and regional identities.

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**Jahaira Arias** returns to the CRE for a second year as a graduate assistant. She is a seventh year doctoral student in the department of History, specializing in the history of Latin America. She 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.

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**Ashley Glassburn Falzetti** is a doctoral candidate in Women's and



Gender Studies at Rutgers with graduate training in Philosophy from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

Her dissertation brings together analyses of epistemic violence from feminist theory and critiques of settler-colonialism. Her current research explores the significance of place in popular narratives about the Miami Indians, raising crucial questions about how race, nationality, and belonging are imagined in the United States – particularly the ways in which indigeneity comes to be marked by historical impossibilities. As a feminist activist and member of the Miami Nation of Indiana, building connections between community-life, writing, and teaching is central to her work as an educator. She has received numerous awards for her research and teaching – most recently serving as the Frances C. Allen Fellow at the Newberry Library and recipient of the Linda Rothman Award for Outstanding Graduate Student Teaching.

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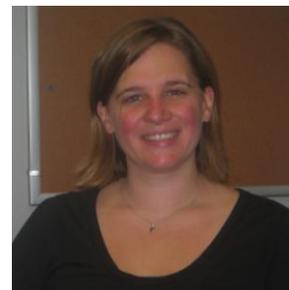
**Kartikeya Saboo** currently does ethnographic research in Newark and South Orange, New Jersey, on the experiences of the current

recession/depression. Previously, he worked in India as a micro finance practitioner, and was responsible for path breaking, worldwide first work in that sector. He has also consulted with PriceWaterhouse Coopers, and the Sir Dorabji Tata Trust, India's leading local development funding agency. He was the Executive Director of Spandana, India's fastest growing micro finance company at the time, before starting the PhD program in cultural anthropology at Rutgers. He is in the sixth year of the program.

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**Wendy Wright** returns to the CRE for a second year as a graduate assistant. She is a seventh 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.

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**Meet our Postdoctoral Associate: Roosbelinda Cárdenas**

The Center for Race and Ethnicity is very pleased to welcome **Roosbelinda Cárdenas** as its Sawyer Seminar Postdoctoral Associate in Race, Place and Space for the 2012-13 academic year. Dr. Cárdenas received her Ph.D. in Cultural Anthropology from the University of California, Santa Cruz. Her current book project looks at the rearticulations of ethnic blackness in the moment following the institutionalization of multicultural reforms in Colombia and the onset of armed violence on the Pacific region where black communities received collective land titles. More broadly, she is interested in the critical analysis of racial formations and their articulations to the politics of space and nature in Latin America.



***Borders and Belonging Conference Coming Soon!***

The Center for Race and Ethnicity is pleased to announce its conference on “Borders and Belonging,” the second of several being sponsored by our

2012-13 Andrew W. Mellon Sawyer Seminar, *Race, Place and Space in the Americas*. Events include a keynote address by Nayan Shah of the University of California at San Diego entitled “Border Intimacies and the Problem of Estrangement” which will take place on Thursday, Dec. 6 at 4:30 pm, and the one day conference, which will take place on Friday, Dec. 7 starting at 9:00am. Conference participants from Rutgers and a number of other universities will offer papers ranging across themes of Borders and Citizenship, Narratives of Belonging, Borders and Bodies, and Displacement and Belonging. We anticipate a rich, engaging discussion at all events.

All events will take place in the Rutgers Student Center on the College Avenue Campus (street address: 126 College Avenue, New Brunswick, NJ). The lecture by Nayan Shah will take place in Lion’s Lounge (ground floor level of the RSC), and the conference will take place in the Graduate Student Lounge, (street level, located behind Au Bon Pain). These events are free and open to the public, but the favor of an RSVP is requested—please contact Mia Kissil at [mkissil@rci.rutgers.edu](mailto:mkissil@rci.rutgers.edu) to do so, or if you have questions. A full list of conference participants is available at <http://raceethnicity.rutgers.edu>.

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