

In this Issue:

CRE Hosts Conference on Scale and Racial Geographies

Thadious Davis Gives Keynote Address

“The Colonizing Trick:” Race, Place and Nation

Sovereignty and Dispossession: Land and the Politics of Identity

Imperial Racial Orders

Imagining Racial Spaces

Looking Ahead: Spring Conference Themes and Dates

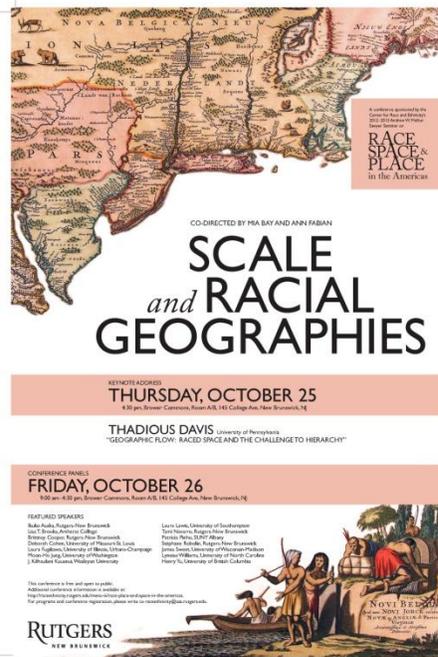
Call for Proposals: 6<sup>th</sup>

Graduate Forum on Race and Ethnicity



**CRE Hosts Conference on Scale and Racial Geographies**

On October 25<sup>th</sup>, 2012 the Rutgers Center for Race and Ethnicity kicked off the first of four conferences scheduled for its 2012-13 Andrew W. Mellon Sawyer Seminar on “Race, Space, & Place in the Americas.” The seminar’s inaugural conference was on *Scale & Racial Geographies*. Designed to outline some of the



broad themes at play in the study of race, space and place, this fascinating conference featured presentations on the topics of race and nation, race and empire, settler colonialism and “raced” space in contexts as diverse as the Cantonese Pacific, the US-Mexican border, the US Virgin Islands, Hawaii, fifteenth century Lisbon, fin-de-siècle Paris, the literary strategies of Richard Wright and even the interior space of black female bodies. Conference presenters included a stellar line up of scholars from universities in the United States, Canada and Britain.

**THADIOUS DAVIS GIVES KEYNOTE ADDRESS**

Thadious Davis, the Geraldine R. Segal Professor of American Social Thought & Professor of English at the University of Pennsylvania delivered the opening keynote address. Davis’s talk, entitled “Geographic Flow: Raced Space and the Challenges to Hierarchies,” provided a stimulating introduction into the complex issues at play in the conference’s themes. She turned to the imagery of chains and chaining to explore problems of power and control of space. Davis began by recalling the ways the presence of “loitering hippies” in Philadelphia’s Rittenhouse Square reconfigured that public space in the 1960s. When these young people began to hang out in the park, Davis remembered, Philadelphia’s municipal authorities took the side of wealthy Philadelphians who insisted that the park’s elegant stone walls “were not for sitting but for marking boundaries.” They evicted the loitering hippies.

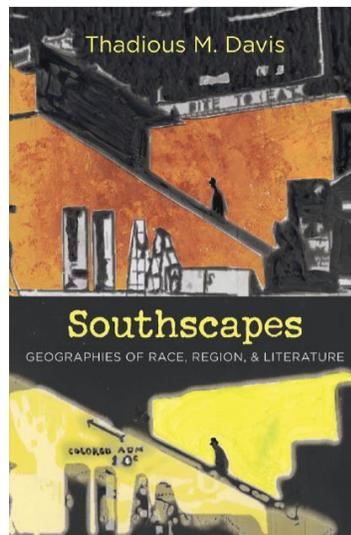
Davis returned to this short-lived challenge, explaining that it marked a beginning of the transformations in attitudes toward public spaces like Rittenhouse Square. It was fitting, she said, that when protests over economic inequality spread to Philadelphia, “Occupy Philadelphia” occupied Rittenhouse Square. “Non-conformist challenges to spatial and other boundaries are important,” Davis suggested. Although protests “may not always result in an immediate shift in social policy,” she suggests, the chains of memory can help us reimagine social values.



Rittenhouse Square today  
<http://press.visitphilly.com/media/1199>

But the heart of Davis’s talk focused on African American writers and their special relationship to space shaped by traumas of a long past. For Davis, space is both literal and metaphoric, public and personal. Following a cue from the poet Elizabeth Alexander, who described living rooms as places

where we see black imagination made visual, a private space that inevitably reverberates against the garish public images usually out of our control.” Davis suggests that for the writers she studies, space includes ‘the interior spaces, inside black homes, inside themselves, but also a struggle to control “garish public images.”’ Davis describes black space as both public and private.



*Southscapes: Geographies of Race, Region and Literature*, by Thadious Davis (University of North Carolina Press, 2011)

Black space, Davis suggested, should therefore not be imagined as wholly public. Instead, the space of African American survival has sometimes been on the inside. Returning to the chain metaphor, she imagined an African American space as functioning like the empty space inside each link in a chain. A tug on the chain can tighten it, but it cannot determine what happens in the open spaces within each

link. Black space has likewise sometimes taken shape within such small and bounded openings.

Neither public nor wholly private, Davis’s notion of black space describes operations within spaces both “encircled and enclosed” but never entirely contained. Davis considered the example of fugitive slave Harriet Jacobs confined in a tiny attic, yet imagining the scenes she wrote in her autobiographical narrative, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. Although Jacob’s body was confined, she found enough imaginative space to emerge and assert herself as a person. Even when interior spaces and imaginative counter-narratives do not produce material confrontations, Davis further notes, they nonetheless constitute a threat to conventional hierarchies. Indeed, it is “remarkable how often imaginative forays offer opportunities to alter the present.”

### **‘THE COLONIZING TRICK’: RACE, PLACE AND NATION**

Those attending the conference returned on Friday morning. Scholars Henry Yu, James Sweet and Ikuko Asaka presented their work in the first panel—“The Colonizing Trick’: Race, Place, and Nation.” They took the invitation to think about “scale” to suggest ways reframing established narratives reveals hidden histories.

In “The Syncopated Rhythms of the Cantonese Pacific: White Supremacy and the Narrative Time of Settler Nations,” Henry Yu, professor of history at the University of British Columbia, argued that histories of nation and empire both fail to capture the complexities of

Chinese migrations. Neither fully explores the regional origins and multinational scope of China's diaspora. Chinese migration, Yu notes, is "largely a story of Cantonese migration." Between 1860 and 1920, the vast majority of immigrants from China—to the U.S., Australia, and Canada—came from Canton.



Henry Yu, *History*, University of British Columbia

Complex factors prompted Cantonese migrants to leave China. They were not the poorest residents of famine-struck regions but were men who followed migration networks persisting across generations. Migrants imagined all sorts of places across the Pacific as "Gum San," or Gold Mountain. The term originated with California's gold rush, but in the minds of migrants from Canton came to name places associated with "aspirations of a better life." Yu and his colleagues have been studying the

"unique, persistent, recurrent, and singular historic process" of Chinese migration from the Cantonese Pacific and exploring ways in which they highlight a long history of settlement that moved east rather than west. In so doing, they have also worked with scholars at Stanford's Spatial History Project, to craft a web-based project that captures complex patterns of movement and settlement and teamed up with elementary school teachers to develop gaming technology that will allow students to engage in interactive research into the complex pasts of their communities.

James Sweet, professor of history at the University of Wisconsin, uncovered another forgotten history in his talk: "Inconvenient Truths: The Hidden Histories of African Lisbon." Sweet turned to the story of African Lisbon after reading about the discovery of a burial pit filled with the bodies

The Chinese Canadian Stories websites includes documents such as this photo of ten Chinese men in baseball uniforms, ca. 1916.



[University of British Columbia Library, Wallace B. Chung and Madeline H. Chung collection, Frank Jue photo, CC-PH-00930] <http://ccs.library.ubc.ca/>

of Africans who had died in the fifteenth century in Lagos, Portugal. Few histories of Portugal acknowledge an African presence in its cities, Sweet notes. Lisbon celebrates its central role in the history of imperialism and exploration with its imposing monument to Henry the Navigator that "glorifies Portuguese adventurism." By contrast, the slave trade that fueled many of Portugal's discoveries remains largely ignored.

The bodies discovered in the mass grave underscored that people from Africa were part of Portuguese metropolitan life, said Sweet, who explained that he often introduces students to the African presence in Portugal by looking at the sixteenth-century paintings that document the presence of African-descended people on Portuguese streets. Such Africans are likewise remembered in Lisbon's street names—Rua do Poço dos Negros or Street of the Black's Pit—and on buildings like the city's custom house, which is still known as Antigo Mercado de Escravos. "The African past is present in Lisbon in plain sight," Sweet observes. But the fact that few people notice or remember it "speaks to a silence about how Africa and its presence in Lisbon is understood in the European world."

Ikuko Asaka, an ACLS-Mellon New Faculty Fellow in Women and Gender Studies at Rutgers, New Brunswick, moved the discussion of race, place and nation back to Canada and the United States. Her talk on "African Diaspora and Settler Colonialism: Geographies of Race, Gender and Empire in North

America” focused ideas about the place of raced bodies in the era of emancipation. White families, she explains, were encouraged to participate in the imperial expansion of the United States and Canada by settling the “uncivilized” spaces of continental North America. Black families, on the other hand, were encouraged to leave the United States and Canada and resettle in the tropical spaces supposedly better suited them. How, she asks, do the discourses of settler colonialism accommodate black freedom? Asaka hopes her work will draw attention to the ways modern constructions of race and ethnicity shape mobility and experiences of space and place. “Mobility works as a way to recognize and produce differences,” she explains.

However, Asaka also stressed that African Americans have often contested the limits on their geographic mobility that whites have tried to impose. This contest was sometimes played out in households, she notes. The black women who built family lives in the towns they helped to establish in Canada and the American West refused to see themselves as out of place. Instead of looking to the tropics for a new home, they imagined “a new black female settler identity” taking root on the fertile frontiers of North America. Black farms and families would flourish there, they maintained, encouraging their people to stake out homesteads in North America.

## SOVEREIGNTY AND DISPOSSESSION: LAND AND THE POLITICS OF IDENTITY

Although appealing to black women, settler colonialism clearly operated at the expense of the indigenous peoples living in the “uncivilized” reaches of North America, many of whom lost their land to the ever-expanding frontiers of Euro-American settlement. The second panel of the day, “Sovereignty and Dispossession: Land and the Politics of Identity,” explored the geographical implications of such losses. Among other things, the panelists stressed that the knowledge of particular places is produced differently by those who lived there before Euro American colonists arrived. These differences persist into the present, creating ongoing dissonances between settler knowledge and indigenous knowledge.

Lisa Brooks, an Associate Professor of English and American Studies at Amherst College, discussed how a Euro-American captivity narrative can help re-imagine land from an indigenous perspective. In a talk entitled “Removals AND/OR Refuge: Simultaneities of Native/Settler Space in the Kwinikw River Valley,” she demonstrated that Mary Rowlandson’s *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God: Being a Narrative of*



*the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson* (1682) contains geographical information that allows us “to look with new eyes at a story that we think we already understand.” Because Rowlandson maps her account in reference to European settlements, she describes her journey as a captive through the Kwinikw River Valley as a seemingly illogical meandering through the wilderness. She could not or willfully would not discern that “the space between “New England” and “Canada” itself was “vast” and “unknown,” but not to the people who had inhabited it for thousands of years.” As Brooks demonstrated by juxtaposing a map reconstructed from indigenous sources with a map drawn by European settlers, “rather than being enmeshed in “solitude” and anarchy, Rowlandson was in actuality entering a highly structured social and geographic space.”

J. Kēhaulani Kauanui, professor of American studies and anthropology at Wesleyan University, continued Brook’s exploration of contested indigenous geographies, but took up the case of present-day Hawai`i. Speaking on



*Kēhaulani Kauanui, Anthropology, Wesleyan University*

“Commons and Commoners in Hawai‘i: Sovereignty and the Racial Politics of Land Dispossession,” Kauanui noted that Hawai‘i is the only state in the United States seeking federal legislative recognition for the indigenous inhabitants living within its borders. However, the state’s actions are designed to undermine rather than protect the Kanaka Maoli (indigenous Hawaiians) Native sovereignty claims. At stake are the lands that they never legally ceded to the U.S. government--which overthrew the Hawaiian Kingdom in 1893 and unilaterally annexed the island archipelago in 1898. In addition to illuminating this ongoing contest, Kauanui’s work raises questions about what constitutes “the commons” or public lands in a place where “both white settler colonialism and Asian settler colonialism combine to perpetuate a racial politics of native Hawaiian dispossession.”

Laura Fugikawa’s “Re-collecting Indian Lives: American Indians and Relocation in Postwar Film” looked at the impact of land dispossession on one group of Native Americans. Fugikawa, Visiting Assistant Professor of Asian American Studies and Gender

& Women’s Studies at the University of Illinois at Chicago, revisits Kent Mackenzie’s 1961 black and white docudrama *The Exiles*. The film tracks the lives of a small group of Native Americans living in Los Angeles. Fugikawa’s reading of the film emphasizes that its “dirty realism” is not free of stereotypes. In particular, she sees the film’s director as crafting scenes designed to reinforce the idea that Indians do not fit in modern spaces. *The Exiles* perpetuates the myth that, “Indians cannot help but experience a temporal lag when they move from the reservation to urban communities,” Fugikawa says.

However, she also finds some of the film’s imagery compelling. Its footage of Indians dancing in a desolate urban landscape, she observes, “speaks to the persistence of Urban Indians.” In Fugikawa’s view it is significant that the film closes with a scene where Native Americans claim a piece of the urban landscape through dancing and communality because it depicts Native Americans as, “not merely exiles from their homelands out of sync with the modern world, but dynamic residents who negotiate the urban landscape in particular ways.”

Laura Lewis, professor of Latin American Anthropology at the University of Southampton, shared her work on “Land and



*Laura Lewis, Latin American Anthropology, University of Southampton*

the Politics of Identity in a Mexican African Descended Community,” which looks at the *morenos* of San Nicolás, Mexico. The *morenos* are a group of black-Indian people “whose distinctive identity has been forged from agrarian histories of slavery and colonialism in Mexico.” They refuse to identify as solely Indian or solely black although, as Lewis attests, they “identify more with Indians and blacks than with Spaniards.” They also reject the Spanish and Indian mestizo identity that underpins the national imaginary of Mexicanness. Instead, they identify with indigenous custom and ancestry, their cowboy past in this cattle region, and the trope of maronage, expressed through narrative and ritual forms. Moreno identity is locally rooted in the land, “etched in the earth that is central to ritual practices and to San Nicoladenses’ senses of belonging to their village and to the wider nation.”

### **IMPERIAL RACIAL ORDERS**

The third panel, “Imperial Racial Orders,” sparked a lively conversation about the meanings of race in places

remade to suit U.S. political and economic imperialism. In his presentation, “Revolutionary Currents: Race and the U.S. Empire Across the Pacific,” Moon-Ho Jung, professor of history at the University of Washington, argued that the critical foundations of the U.S.’s modern national security apparatus first arose out of campaigns to modify and deport Asian radicals. His talk focused on a 1920 strike by Japanese and Filipino workers on a Hawaiian sugar plantation, in which the Japanese were viewed as aliens whose claims aroused suspicion of possible Japanese government attempts to stir up Asian discontent. The plantation’s striking Filipino workers, by contrast, inspired far less alarm since they were understood to be making claims on the U.S. state as colonial subjects.

The federal government’s response to the strike, which involved developing national security measures defined to combat alien agitators, was shaped by highly racialized concerns about Japanese ambitions to form alliances with former Spanish colonies in the



*Moon-Ho Jung, History, University of Washington*

Pacific that were then under U.S. control. Through studying this strike and its aftermath, Jung seeks to articulate how white supremacy, anti-radicalism and empire intersected in the first three decades of the twentieth century.

University of Missouri historian Deborah Cohen followed with a presentation, entitled “Loyalty and Betrayal: Negotiating a U.S.-Mexican Social World.” Her talk explored the far-flung world navigated by male Mexican migrants to Chicago who traverse “a transnational circuit of sex, love, and betrayal.” Drawing on her interviews with Mexican men in Chicago and their wives and girlfriends back home in the state of Durango, Cohen argued that the interdependence of migrant life in Chicago creates a male solidarity that allows men to pursue extramarital affairs in full view of the male relatives of their wives and girlfriends. Such relatives view affairs in the United States as permissible because they are generally carried on with American and not Mexican women. By the same logic, the male relatives assume that the philanders’ Mexican wives are not dishonored by their partners’ infidelities so long as their affairs remain unknown in Mexico. Should any of their affairs become public knowledge in Mexico, the guilty party would have to break off the affair. But so long as their infidelities remain

secret outside Chicago, the bond between male migrants is stronger than their loyalty to female relatives back home. Male migrants to Chicago depend on one another in order to prosper in the United States, and codes of acceptable social behavior have expanded to fit overseas infidelities.

In her presentation, “Putting Race to Work: Economic Development and Racialization in the US Virgin Islands,” Tami Navarro, who teaches in the Anthropology department at Rutgers-New Brunswick, uses the Economic Development Commission (EDC) on the island of St. Croix as a case study for understanding the nuances of the relationship between neo-liberalism, race, and color. St. Croix’s EDC attracts multinational corporations by providing large tax breaks for establishing local offices that employ islanders. Although the EDC provided some islanders with lucrative jobs and is designed to stimulate the Virgin Islands’ economic growth, Navarro found that in St. Croix “‘EDC people’ are regarded with ambivalence: Locals view them as both potential sources of generous income and as social pariahs intent on re-colonizing the island in the model of plantation slavery.”

Crucians have good reason to be ambivalent about the opportunities EDC companies are supposed to represent. Navarro’s research suggests that EDC projects do little to stimulate the islands’ economy and instead tend to reinforce the stratification of gender, race, and class among the islanders. The EDC policies meant to encourage multinational corporate presence in St.



Tami Navarro, Anthropology, Rutgers-NB

Croix often result in the establishment of sham companies with little interest in St. Croix as a labor pool for their enterprises. In hiring they tend to favor light skinned highly acculturated young women, not all of whom are Crucians—some hail from other Caribbean islands. Hired largely because they appeal to the EDC’s company’s corporate executives, these employees do little actual work, and receive minimal training. Not surprisingly, Navarro also found that EDC projects make few substantive or sustained contributions to the local economy. EDC companies frequently leave the island at a moment’s notice, either because the companies never really existed in the first place or because they find greener pastures elsewhere.

**IMAGINING RACIAL SPACES**

The final panel, “Imagining Racial Spaces,” further developed several of the themes discussed throughout the conference. Brittney Cooper, an Assistant Professor of Women’s and Gender Studies and Africana Studies

at Rutgers, New Brunswick, and a Sawyer Seminar Fellow, began the panel with her paper, “Bodies of Usable Knowledge: the Black Female Body as Space and Place of Racial Knowledge-Making.” Cooper’s work echoed some of the ideas



Brittney Cooper, Women’s and Gender Studies, Rutgers-NB

Professor Davis had explored in her keynote, and urged the audience to interrogate conventional assumptions about space and knowledge. Cooper described early 20<sup>th</sup>-century African American women as “civically unknowable” persons. Under Jim Crow, she pointed out that public space not only “made all black bodies inferior, it made many black female bodies unrecognizable.” Jim Crow public restrooms for women, for example, were marked either “Ladies” or “Colored.” Restrooms and other segregated facilities did not acknowledge the

existence of black women who were both ladies as well as “colored.”

Stéphane Robolin’s presentation, “*Black Boy* and the Racial Geographies of Richard Wright,” also explored the ways racial knowledge has been produced. Robolin, an Assistant Professor of English at Rutgers, New Brunswick, and a Sawyer Seminar Fellow, traced the literary “mapping [of] racial geography” in the writing of author Richard Wright. Robolin’s analysis also placed Wright’s work in a transnational context, comparing Wright’s autobiographical writing to the autobiography of South African Peter Abrahams. In this comparison, Robolin explored the similarities in both writers’ descriptions of “segregated spatialities” as a consequence of common experiences as well as their interpersonal relationship.

Lynsey Williams, Associate Professor of Art History at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, analyzed the visual vocabulary of “Chocolat the Clown,” a persona adopted by Rafael Padilla, a former slave from Cuba, who was a popular performer in late 19<sup>th</sup> century France. Padilla’s Chocolat the Clown was a racially complex figure, Williams explained in her presentation, “Chocolat but not Black: Space and the Contours of the Black Latin American “Primitive” in Fin-de-Siècle Paris.” Drawing on a collection of images of Chocolat and other black figures in French and Latin American art and advertising, Williams compared the ideas about race seen in these two sets of images. Both sets of images shared a kind of racial primitivism, Williams noted, but she then went on to suggest that the



*Moulin Rouge French Cancan la Goulue Chocolat*  
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/manet/2299796245/>

figure of Chocolat also “disrupted simple binary frameworks.” The fact that Padilla was Latin American pushed against French identification of blackness with Africa. Williams supported her arguments with careful readings of several images that captured the complexities involved in visualizing race. A mule in one ad, for example, conjured Chocolat’s Afro-Cuban heritage, while also signifying his racial hybridity and his French fans’ discomfort with Chocolat’s ambiguous identity.

Patricia Pinho, associate professor of Latin American, Caribbean, and US Latino Studies, at the University at Albany, State University of New York concluded the last panel with “‘The Way We Were’: African American Tourism and the Temporal Maps of the Black Diaspora.” Pinho’s work on roots tourism conceptualizes a “map of Africanness” wherein race, and more specifically, blackness, is mapped not

only onto space but also through time in the imagination of modern travelers.

African American tourists, she points out, travel to Brazil in part because they imagine it as “connected to Africa” in ways that the United States is not. Brazil’s tourist industry encourages such ideas by marketing Brazil as a destination for travelers searching for black racial authenticity. Travel advertisements function as a powerful source for the construction of an African American tourist gaze on Brazil, which rests on the binary and hierarchical notion that Afro-Brazilians have supposedly preserved African traditions, but lack the politicized forms of black modernity. This “evolutionist” understanding of blackness, Pinho argues, is the result of the geopolitics of the African diaspora, in which the power of national affiliations can undermine the shared racial identity of Afro-descendants in the Americas.

The discussions that followed each of the Scale and Racial Geographies sessions were broad in scope, lively, and fostered additional insights into the themes the conference was designed to address. Conference participants included scholars from a variety of disciplines, including literature, history, anthropology, art history, Native American Studies and

Asian American Studies. From their different perspectives, they raised compelling questions about racial identities along differing scales of time, space, and place. They also stimulated conversations about subjects ranging from empires and communities, to individual bodies; and discussions about how race and indigeneity are embedded in particular places, as well as how racial ideas travel across colonies, nations and empires. The Sawyer Seminars are meant to offer an occasion for scholarship that is broadly comparative. We thank the participants for allowing us to do just that.

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### ***Looking Ahead: Dates and Themes for Spring Conferences***

If your interest has been piqued by what you read about this conference, please be sure to save the dates of the Spring Conferences, which are sure to be equally illuminating.

- ***Race, Nature and Geography*** - Friday, March 8, 2013, 9:00 am – 5:00 pm. A one-day conference featuring scholars from varied disciplines and universities within the U.S. and Canada.
- ***Cities, Towns and Suburbs*** – Thursday and Friday, May 2-3, 2013. Highlights include a keynote lecture by Douglass Massey, Princeton University and a one-day conference with scholars from a variety of fields.

Please see our website for additional details about these conferences.

## **Call for Proposals: 6th Graduate Forum on Race and Ethnicity**

The Center for Race & Ethnicity invites Rutgers M.A. and Ph.D. candidates to take part in a cross-disciplinary conversation about graduate research related to the study of race and ethnicity. Students from all levels of study (from 1st year graduate students to ABDs) and from all schools at Rutgers, including Public Policy, Law, Social Work, Education, Business, and Arts and Sciences, are welcome!

This event is part of the Center for Race & Ethnicity's ongoing initiative to promote interdisciplinary exchange and collaboration.

Panelists will give a brief 5-7 minute presentation of their work. Formal papers are not required for participation.

**SHARE** your research and receive feedback on a course paper, dissertation proposal, chapter or poster in a casual and supportive environment. Well-developed projects and papers in progress are welcome.

**MEET** other Rutgers graduate students across schools, disciplines, and departments working on projects related to race and ethnicity. Each panel will be followed by informal, cross-disciplinary dialogue exploring future directions for research.

**LEARN** about fellowship resources and receive job market advice at workshops led by faculty and advanced grad students.

Deadline for submissions: January 21, 2013

Send to:  
[CREgradforum@gmail.com](mailto:CREgradforum@gmail.com)

Submissions should include:

- 1) your name, year in school, department, campus, and email address;
- 2) a 150-250 word description of your presentation and argument;
- 3) a brief 1-2 line biography.

Organized by: Stephen Allen (History), Jahaira Arias (History), Ashley Falzetti (WGS), Kartikeya Saboo (Anthropology), Wendy Wright (Political Science)

For more information about this forum or the CRE visit <http://raceethnicity.rutgers.edu> or email us at [CREgradforum@gmail.com](mailto:CREgradforum@gmail.com)

The event will take place in the Pane Room of Alexander Library, College Avenue Campus, on Friday, February 22, 2013. It is scheduled from 9:00 am – 4:00 pm.

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