

Alliance to Advance Liberal Arts Colleges
Faculty Workshop Program Proposal 2019 at Carleton College
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Teaching, Researching, and Embodying the Black Diaspora at Liberal Arts Colleges

Workshop description

In an era constituted by color blind discourse and post-racialism on the one hand, and racial terrorism and resurgent white nationalism on the other, it is more important than ever to research, study, and teach about the Black Diaspora. As the demands of student activists on liberal arts college campuses throughout the country suggest, the presence of African Diasporic students, faculty, and curricula are currently lacking, but are desperately desired. The need for such content--and those who can teach it--goes beyond often hollow rhetoric about “diversity” and “inclusion”; students are deeply concerned about the gap in their education regarding the racial implications of phenomena including structural dispossession, the global maldistribution of resources, political disenfranchisement, and cultural imposition and appropriation. In addition, they are keenly interested in the ways that the latter have been contested, challenged, and rejected by those racialized as Black. In short, as a heuristic, the Black Diaspora reveals power relations nationally and globally; pressing social, political, and economic issues; the manifold manifestations of anti-black racism; and current and historic struggles for empowerment, equality, and self-determination.

However, this content is not unanimously supported. Professors who engage in this sort of research, especially when it is linked to struggles for social transformation beyond the academy, have been targeted by white supremacists, right-wing media outlets, and even by some college and university administrators. Less hostile faculty and students have nonetheless suggested that such content is too controversial, divisive, or irrelevant to an ostensibly equal society. A dearth of Black faculty, institutional support, and resources present other barriers to the teaching, research, and study of the Black Diaspora at elite liberal arts colleges.

Thus, through a combination of panel discussions, facilitated activities, guided readings, intellectual exchange, and open dialogue, this workshop seeks to engage questions including: what does it mean to teach about the Black Diaspora at predominantly white, elite liberal arts colleges that tend to have a very low percentage of Black students and faculty? What are the ethical and moral responsibilities of non-Black persons teaching about the Black Diaspora? Are there pedagogical and epistemological approaches that should be used when teaching this content to white, often affluent, students? How can liberal arts administrators strive to recruit and retain Black Diasporic faculty to ensure that this content is represented on their campuses? And finally, what are the resources and relationships available that can help to support and sustain research on and the study of the Black Diaspora?

The year 2019 is an optimal time to have a workshop dedicated to these issues given that it will be the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of Black Studies departments and programs across the United States. This development led to the largest increase in Black students, faculty, and staff in the history of higher education in the U.S. It also led to the institutionalization of the study of the Black Diaspora in colleges, universities, centers, and institutes throughout the nation. The

workshop, while incorporating 10-15 liberal arts faculty members that research and teach the Black Diaspora, is open to all students, faculty, administrators, and community members who wish to attend. Carleton College is an ideal location because of the college's dedication to diversity and the administration's commitment to foster sustainable development in this area. It has a small but important and influential cadre of faculty that teach about and research the Black Diaspora. Additionally, new facilities like the Weitz Center and the new hotel being built a block away from the campus have ample space.

Intended Impact

Our goal is for the workshop to have immediate impact on the scholarship and teaching of subjects that address Black Diaspora issues and themes. We also intend to engage a cohort of junior scholars across the AALAC colleges to build a community of individuals committed to this who can also serve as a support network for each other and complement retention strategies of Black faculty across liberal arts colleges. Almost every AALAC college is already engaged in these conversations; our hope is that this workshop can consolidate them and provide a pedagogical framework that can strengthen our work in the classroom and contribute to sustainable improvements.

Follow-up Activities:

A primary goal of the workshop is to produce a special journal issue about "Teaching, Researching, and Embodying the Black Diaspora in Liberal Arts Colleges." The application process for workshop participants will include the submission of a short abstract for a future paper/essay to contribute to the volume. In addition, we would like to create:

- A platform that facilitates the sharing of syllabi, grants, fellowships, workshops, conferences, etc. about the issues addressed in the workshop
- Collaborative articles in non-academic publications such as the *Conversation*
- Roundtable proposal for annual meetings of professional organizations such as the Association for the Study of African American Life and History, the National Conference of Black Political Scientists, the National Council for Black Studies, the African Studies Association, and the Association for the Study of the Worldwide African Diaspora

Schedule, Friday-Sunday, June 2019

Friday

1. Travel Day
2. Dinner
3. Opening Panel
 - a. Administering the Study of the Black Diaspora

Saturday

1. Breakfast
2. Session 1
 - a. Teaching the Black Diaspora at Elite, Predominately White Institutions: Pedagogy, Epistemology, Praxis
3. Lunch + Keynote panel
 - a. "Disciplining Blackness: White Backlash to Black Insurgency"
4. Session 2

- a. Between Ethics and Education: Non-Black Educators Teaching the Black Diaspora
 - 5. Break
 - 6. Session 3
 - a. On Knowledge and Narrative: Teaching Africa Beyond Abjection
 - 7. Break
 - 8. Dinner
- Sunday
- 1. Breakfast
 - 2. Session 4
 - a. Teaching While Black: Securing Resources and Relationships for Success at Liberal Arts Colleges
 - 3. Mini-Session
 - a. Next Steps- Planning the journal special issue
 - 4. Return Travel