

THE GRIOT

The Newsletter for the Association of Black Sociologists

WINTER 2025

Beverly Lindsay

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*David Ross: Reflections
of a Unique Educator*

Kimya Nuru Dennis

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*Integrating Harold Cruse
and Marcus Garvey*

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*Preparing Our Students
for an AI-Driven Future*

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My first ABS Conference!

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President (2025)

THE GRIOT

The Newsletter for the Association of Black Sociologists

Laura Mvula: Green Garden

historical sociological imagination.

The scholarship and activism grounded within ABS moves past rhetoric and has established a collective purpose towards community and societal transformation. It is a space where you immediately feel at home and where your voice and contributions matter. The Association of Black Sociologists has never strayed the course of being committed to social justice and uplifting the scholarship and voices of Black Sociological Thought and research. ABS is more than a subsection or division; it is an entire organization comprised of a group of scholars, independent researchers, wellness practitioners, and community activists committed to using their expertise towards affirming voices and societal change, for those within and outside of academia. The scholarship and engagement of ABS members illustrate the understanding of the importance of the field of sociology being grounded in both theory and practice. It is an honor to be a member of an inclusive and welcoming organization, committed to intellectual curiosity, active engagement, and transformative strategies of building practices centering resiliency, resistance, and social transformation in our scholarship and communities. ABS is truly an inviting place, where your research, membership, ideas of the direction of the organization should go, conference attendance, and beyond, are heard and valued. It is an organization actively seeking social justice and liberation, with the aim of empowerment for all people.

While I am relatively new to ABS as an organization, I knew I wanted to serve in some capacity. Recently revisiting a conversation held with past President Dr. Barbara Scott almost ten years ago, who recommended I join ABS, I would have never imagined I would be in the position to serve as the President, continuing the groundbreaking work of the trailblazers and members before me. I mention this because if there

A portrait of Dr. Nishaun Battle, a Black woman with dark hair and bangs, wearing a bright blue blazer over a black top. She is smiling and has her hand near her chin. The background is a light-colored wooden wall.

Dr. Nishaun Battle

Assoc. Professor, Dept of Sociology and Criminal Justice
Virginia State University

Dear ABS Family,

I am happy and deeply honored to serve as your current President of the Association of Black Sociologists. I want to extend my deepest gratitude to the founders of this organization, past and present leadership, and members, for the trust you have placed in me to lead and serve in this position. As your President, I can assure you all that I am committed to the mission, goals, and values of ABS and look forward to working with you all. Our time gathering in Memphis, TN, for the 55th annual conference, themed "All Black Everything": Advancing a Black Sociological Tradition of Scholar Activism, was a time of community building, rigorous and innovative scholarship, the opportunity to network with colleagues, reconnect with old friends, and, for many members, the chance to establish new collegial friendships. From its inception in 1970, ABS has served as both an intellectually engaged and community-engaged organization, unapologetically centering the knowledge, research, and experiences of Black lives within the scope of both contemporary and

is anyone who has ever considered serving in any capacity, it is never too late, and your service is wanted and needed.

As I step into this role, I am inspired by what we, as a collective community, will continue to do as members and how we can build together. Working together is now more crucial than ever in these uncertain times. We are indeed in critical times, where critical inquiry has and continues to be banned in many places and institutions. In a time where freedom of speech is being challenged, systemic racism is being upheld and applauded, and structural exclusion remains deeply entrenched in the fabric of society and many academic institutions, our work and the mission of the Association of Black Sociologists is as urgent as ever. Fortunately, it is certain that our scholarship, ideas, and activism, which center Black lives and experiences in society, will help further the mission of the founders, past and current members, towards shaping the justice-centered society we envision for the next generation.

We must continue as a collective to pursue an unrelenting commitment to social justice. As such, the theme of next year's conference, which will be held in New York, NY, August 6-8, 2026, is "We Are the Ones We Have Been Waiting For: Using Black Sociological Thought as a tool of Liberation." We have the talent, intellect, and skillset to accomplish what we envision. Leveraging our collective expertise, we will continue to write the narrative we want to see today and tomorrow. First, I would like to continue strengthening mentorship relationships and encourage others to join the RAMP program as mentors and/or mentees. I believe creating pathways for emerging Black sociologists, practitioners, and early-career scholars to thrive in academia and in their respective communities helps sustain this organization's success and makes us all stronger as a unit. Additionally, acknowledging space for non-traditional scholars, whose scholarship may lean more towards community activism, is central to the development of ABS. Having a diverse group of scholars and scholar activists will maintain the vibrant bastion of intergenerational knowledge in ABS.

Second, I aim to expand our impact beyond academia. The importance of transforming scholarship and dialogue into active change is a responsibility we have to the communities we study and write about. I encourage those in the classroom to identify ways we

can bring community into our classrooms and how our research can expand beyond them. I also believe our academic writing and public discourse should be accessible to community members. Our scholarship is essential. On that note, if anyone is interested in revamping the ABS journal and would like to serve as the Editor, please email me at nbattle@vsu.edu. Noting the importance of our research reflecting the experiences and challenges facing Black communities across the Black diaspora nationally and globally, I encourage us to collaborate and cite each other when applicable.

Lastly, as academics, it is easy to forget to take a moment for ourselves while balancing research, teaching, and service. As a community wellness educator and certified yoga teacher, I firmly believe we need to prioritize self-care. I encourage all members to create a wellness plan that fits their unique lives and responsibilities. That said, I am happy to announce the formation of the ABS wellness committee. This committee is intentional about ensuring that members do not overwork themselves while serving, and instead focus on promoting wellness for themselves and others.

To every member of ABS, I want to end by saying this: your voice matters, your scholarship is valuable, and we are stronger together than as individuals. Please consider joining or forming a committee to help advance this organization. As your President, I genuinely welcome your ideas, input, and any way you want to contribute. I promise to listen, encourage collaboration, and lead in a way that reflects the mission of this intellectual and activist organization. I will always prioritize community, justice, and liberation for everyone.

Thank you for your confidence, partnership, and commitment to ABS's vision. I am genuinely honored to serve as your President, and I look forward to what we will achieve together. - Thank you.

THE
GRIOT

ABS
ASSOCIATION OF BLACK SOCIOLOGISTS

Letter From The Editor

- Lisa LaCon

THE GRIOT

Greetings ABS Family,

Kim Burrell - Everywhere You Go

Before editing, I always envision what I want an issue to communicate. Often, current events shape the story's direction, but the past does too. In our Winter 2025 issue of The Griot, we reflect on history, acknowledge the present, and look toward the future. Coincidentally, each article connects with the artist Sage Gallon's work. From the cover, symbolizing our kingship, to the pieces woven throughout this issue, his artistry mirrors the depth and intention of our authors.

This issue's reflections on the past include Reflections of a Unique Educator by Beverly Lindsay; DuBois's Black Reconstruction at Ninety by Rutledge Dennis; Sixty Years After the Moynihan Report by Lisa LaCon; and Integrating Harold Cruse and Marcus Garvey by Kimya Nuru Dennis, each piece inviting us to reconsider the foundations that continue to shape Black life, scholarship, and sociopolitical analysis. To acknowledge the present, we highlight Ashley Melchert's heartfelt narrative, My First ABS Conference, which captures the immediacy, energy, and community that define our current moment as Black sociologists. Essentially, we are reminiscing and examining whether past occurrences are benefiting the present.

Looking toward the future, Akil Kokayi Khalfani offers a powerful admonition about artificial intelligence and the evolving landscape before us, urging us to prepare, adapt, and remain vigilant as new technologies reshape our world.

As 2025 comes to an end, this issue calls us to honor where we have been, stand firmly in where we are, and boldly envision where we are headed.

Enjoy,
Lisa LaCon, Ph.D., CRC



BLESSED Ministries, Inc./Hampton University

Dr. Lisa LaCon is Co-Founder and Director of BLESSED Ministries, Inc., a nonprofit workforce development organization and an adjunct psychology professor at Hampton University. She holds a Ph.D. in Psychiatric Rehabilitation from Rutgers University, a master's in Rehabilitation Counseling, a bachelor's in Sociology from Hampton University, and a certification as a Rehabilitation Counselor. In addition, she is the Founder and Executive Producer of Urban Tools for Change Network, a YouTube channel for residents of urban communities who would like to learn more about mental health issues and how to achieve wellness and recovery goals.



About Sage Gallon

Sage Gallon is a multidisciplinary artist from New York whose work includes painting, photography, spoken word, and performance. After enduring a decade of homelessness and addiction, he turned his life around and created powerful art. His work has been shown in galleries in Los Angeles, New York, Dubai, and elsewhere, exploring themes of survival, transformation, and spiritual awakening. Gallon was recognized as one of NBC's "40 Black Artists to Watch" in 2014.

His artwork is available at sagegallon.com.

David Ross: Reflections of a Unique Educator

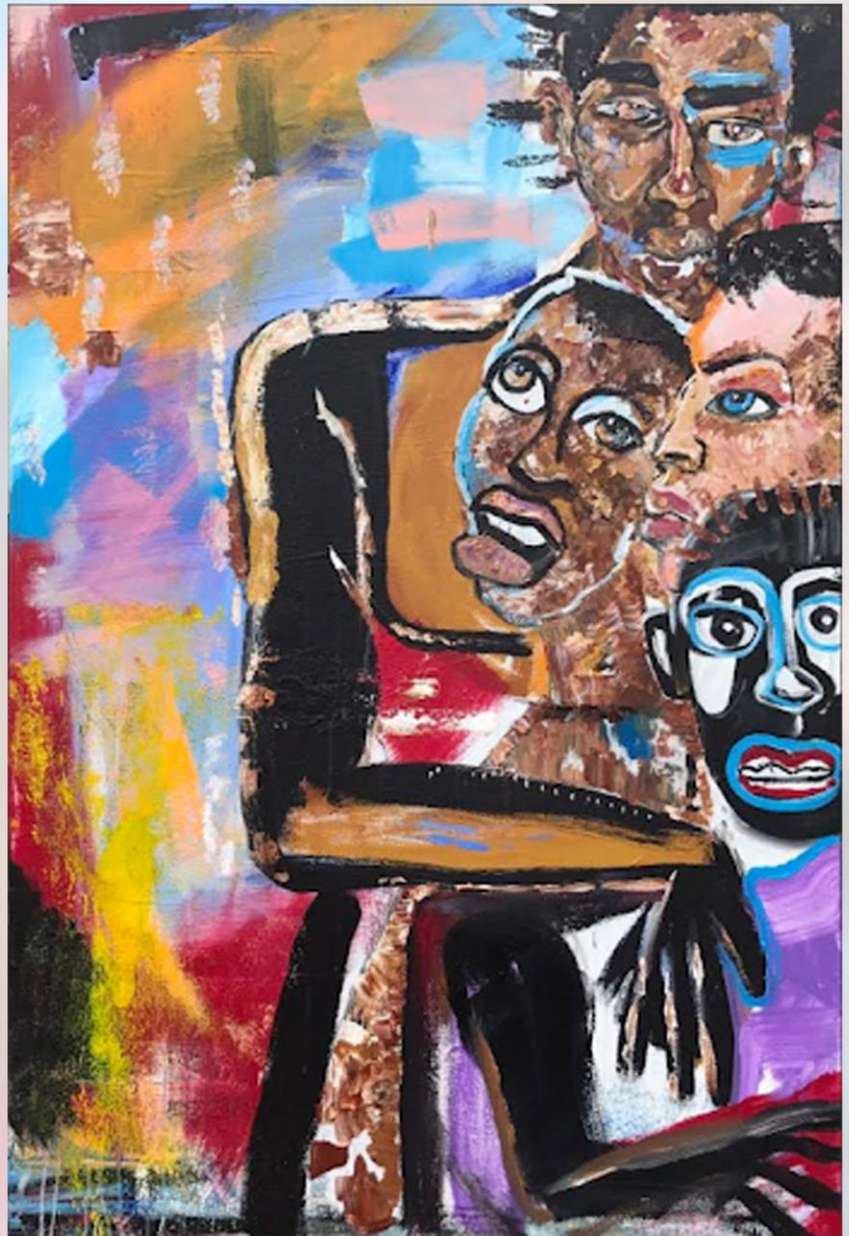
Via Recognitions on a Harmonious 90th Birthday

BY Beverly Lindsay

Various Artists - Lift Every Voice and Sing

Reflections surfaced as a Baby Boomer visited her high school, rekindling memories of those bygone days, from both personal and sociological perspectives on education. Some memories emerged, especially when I made a special effort to spend an afternoon with my English teacher, David Lee Ross, whom I telephoned to request a visit. He readily agreed, and a local school police officer directed me to his home. Sadly, police officers' presence is needed at American schools, given the ongoing violence and killings. Educational sites should enlighten students, faculty, principals, administrators, parents, and guardians. Safe environments for learning and interaction among all demographic groups are sine qua non. Or in layman's terms... essential.

David warmly greeted me as he sat comfortably on his veranda. After inquiring about my family and siblings, he began sharing stories and recounting life and history in South Texas from the 1940s to the present. Especially interesting were our recollections of the days of both de jure (legal) and de facto (by practice) school segregation. In May 1954, the Supreme Court struck down de jure school segregation (before I began school), but de facto segregation continued. His youth was mainly during the era of de jure segregation, while his professional life involved both. He graduated from what



is now Texas A&M Kingsville with courses in agriculture, along with a certification in English. Years later, he earned an M.Ed. in School Administration at Kingsville.

After World War II, GIs returned home and often pursued college degrees focusing on agriculture in rural Texas. Reality confronted David. When offered a teaching position at the Skidmore-Tynan School District, he became an English teacher. English teachers were desperately needed where both English and Spanish served as the main languages, given the presence of Whites/Anglos, Mexicans, and Coloureds/Negroes in three separate school systems. His cheerful personality seemed to mesh well with all three groups.

Of interest to me were his articulations and reflections on his unanticipated positions within the school district and on external communal interactions. David, due to the size of the school district and the need for qualified personnel with appropriate bachelor's and

master's degrees, held almost all positions throughout his 50-year-plus professional career. He was an English teacher, school principal, superintendent, finance officer, sports announcer at games, and bus driver. Yet, he continually taught English both formally and informally. In these roles, my ongoing educational interactions took place with David. I remember his fundamental instruction when writing and speaking:

“Tell them what you’re going to tell them; tell them; and tell them what you told them.”

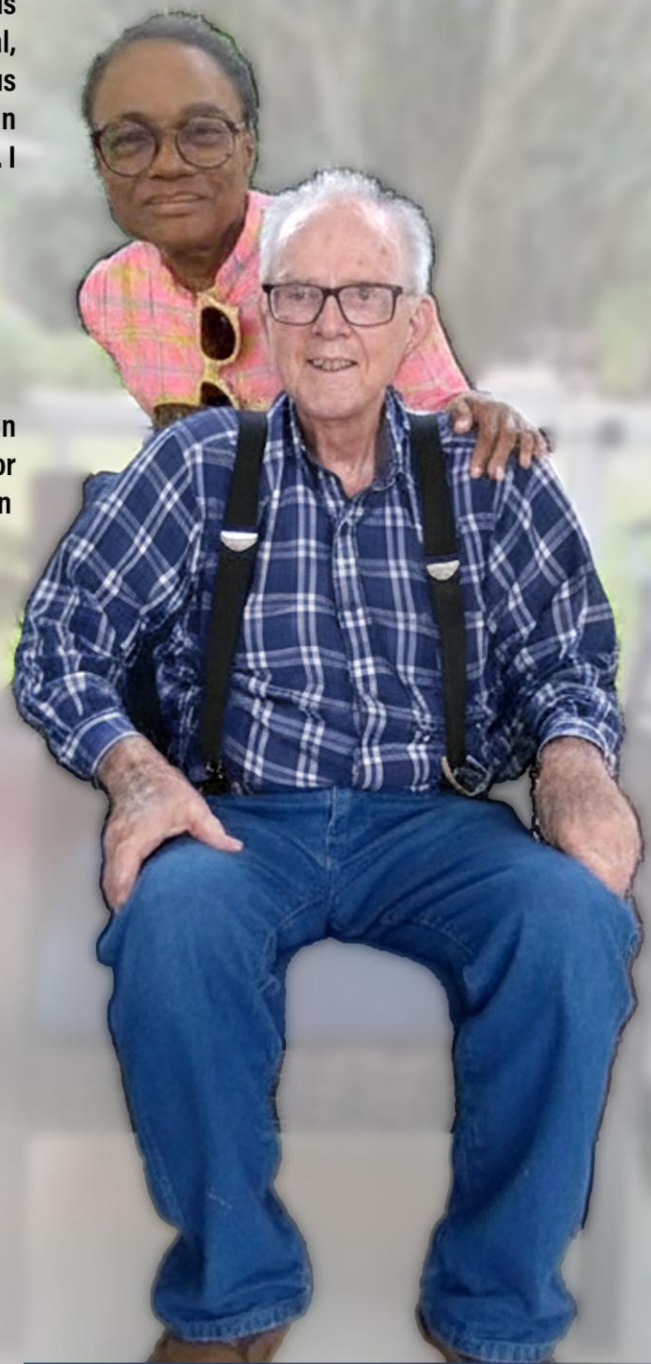
With coaching, his fundamental phrase led me to become the first person from the school district to win a state championship in any subject or athletic arena - at the University of Texas at Austin. I was the champion in persuasive speaking, now known as debate and/or forensics, depending on the state and school districts. His adage was a memorable school experience and lesson that I adhered to throughout my Ph.D. program, where the speaker or writer: 1) states the objectives; 2) articulates and expounds the objectives; and 3) synthesizes or summarizes the presentation of the objectives.

David enjoyed reflecting on historical and current events, such as playing baseball with notable Negro players who also engaged in county affairs. He emphasized the value of playing sports with both Anglo and Negro players, viewing it as an opportunity to learn about different cultures and histories, despite de jure formal school and church segregation. For decades, de facto practices persisted, preventing Negro students from becoming valedictorians or quarterbacks in the county. I remember a Negro principal from a formerly segregated county school, with a master's degree and many years of experience, who could not transfer to or be hired at an integrated school. Meanwhile, Anglo teachers lacking degrees were hired.

As expected, David's views on fairness regularly shifted between school and sports across different cultural and demographic groups. Near the end of my August afternoon visit, a summation of David's perspective emerged: “People are people and are to be respected.” Hopefully, this idea will spread in South Texas and beyond. If so, his 90th birthday views can reflect and be similar to his various positions in the school and district.

In October 2025, a serene 90th birthday was celebrated for an educator who moved beyond the walls of a school district!

(above: photo of Dr. Lindsay with David Ross)



Beverly Lindsay, Ph.D., Ed.D., has been a visiting professor at University College London, Social Research Institute, and at the University of Oxford, Green Templeton College, through National Science Foundation (NSF) grants. She conducted research comparing Ph.D. students in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) demographics in England and the USA.

Integrating

Harold Cruse and Marcus Garvey

BY Kimya Nuru Dennis

Lakim Shabazz - Red, Black & Green

The sustaining lifeblood for Black people is to construct and integrate concepts, theories, perspectives, and approaches that can be generally applied to every person, every space, and every circumstance, or explicitly applied to Black people. This creation and integration require challenging the tendency to focus only on what is familiar and with which we agree. Challenging this tendency needs an understanding of critiques, criticisms, disagreements, debates, and, when all is said and done, highlighting contributions, commonalities, and collaborations that particularly benefit Black Actions, Black Solutions, and Black Progress.

Both Harold Cruse and Marcus Garvey emphasized action, solutions, and progress. Harold Cruse discussed Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) in *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual*. If truth be told, Cruse highlighted Amy Ashwood Garvey and Amy Jacques Garvey to support his criticisms. However, Cruse and Garvey represented different forms of Black Nationalism; Harold Cruse sometimes considered himself a Neo-Black Nationalist. Whereas Garvey's form of racial separatism and Black Nationalism were integrated with a form of Pan-Africanism that focused on Africa. Rather than subscribing to Pan-Africanism (which has endured more than a century of debate over its meanings and goals), Cruse encouraged African Americans to focus on the problems and solutions facing them.

Harold Cruse also appreciated Booker T. Washington while criticizing Marcus Garvey, even though Washington had inspired Garvey. However, there are two ways in which Garvey differed from Booker T. Washington. One way that Garvey differed from Washington is also a reason Cruse criticized. Another way Marcus Garvey differed from Booker T. Washington and Harold Cruse was regarding racial



separatism. Harold Cruse was not a capitalist and did not believe in meritocracy, whereas Washington was a capitalist who used a merit model. Garvey agreed with Washington on this point. The difference between Garvey and Washington is that, although Washington was not a Black Nationalist, he valued racial separatism for the development of knowledge and skills within a segregated context to advance in merit-based capitalism. However, Washington did not see racial separatism as a permanent goal. Cruse shared Washington's view that racial separatism has a purpose and does not mean complete removal or permanence. Therefore, Cruse did not define Black Nationalism as total separation from America or its population. This contrasts with how Garvey and UNIA appeared to focus on Africa, efforts to return to Africa through Black Star

Line, and an apparent encouragement of complete racial separatism (though Garvey and UNIA allowed non-blacks to provide specific resources). Such an approach or goal of Garvey and UNIA can create uncertainty about how much they focus on the concerns and solutions for African Americans.

Examples in

The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual:

"In 1926, the highly inspirational, but also romantic and escapist, character of the Garvey movement served to hide the fact that the movement was not facing the hard realities in a scientific way—either at home or in Africa. For example, during the Lafayette Theater strike none other than Garvey's first wife, Mrs. Amy Ashwood Garvey, brought her own musical comedy on to the Lafayette stage.... But the timing of the appearance of this musical by a leading nationalist, showed that as far as the Lafayette strike was concerned, the nationalists were sorely lacking in the virtues of political unity concerning issues closer at hand than the distant shores of Africa." (Page 82)

"Mrs. A. Jacques Garvey wrote that 'the subtle economic thralldom of Colonial Powers in the Caribbean fools many West Indians.'" (Page 47)

"Thus, it was difficult for the Garveyites to swallow the fact that much of the criticism coming from American Negro leadership was justified; because the West Indians wanted American Negroes to achieve the kind of nationalist unity as a minority, that the West Indians could not achieve as a majority at home, and never have to this day." (Page 47)

Understanding cultural differences is necessary to comprehend and meet the needs and solutions of specific collectives. African Americans. The attempt to ignore differences also ignores variance in needs and solutions. This is why Cruse critiqued W.A. Domingo, Jamaican socialist and youngest editor of the UNIA Negro World, for not distinguishing Afro-American from Afro-British. Cruse compared this to Amy Jacques Garvey's description of Jamaica:

"Said Mrs. A. Jacques Garvey years later, describing Jamaica in 1929: 'The birth-rate increased with

unemployment, as idleness encourages child production.... The grocery trade—wholesale and retail—were in the hands of Chinese.... The Syrians and Lebanese practically monopolized the clothing and shoe trades. Thus, money that had to be spent to buy the barest necessities of life went into the pockets of alien traders.'" (Page 131)

Cruse reiterated the importance of cultural differences by stating, "And this in a land of a solid black majority! But once a West Indian gets to the United States he becomes critical of Negroes being exploited because they 'don't understand business.'" (page 131)

The last criticism to be highlighted is that Cruse and some other Black individuals have accused Garvey of overemphasizing colorism to define a sense of Africanness and Blackness.

Garvey's focus on physical appearance and melanin initially influenced UNIA's voice, leadership, and representatives. This emphasis on colorism was once viewed as respectful and helpful, aiming to make Black people with darker skin more visible within UNIA and the overall Black population, preventing them from being silenced or mistreated. It also served as a counter to the NAACP, which was led by co-founder W.E.B. Du Bois and other lighter-skinned or mulatto leaders. Over time, the emphasis on colorism was seen as exaggerated, excluding capable Black individuals and fueling tensions between Marcus Garvey and lighter-skinned or mulatto Black people such as W.E.B. Du Bois. Focusing on melanin did not align with the makeup of UNIA chapters in predominantly white countries and the West Indies, where interracial and inter-ethnic reproduction among Africans, Asians, and Europeans occurs due to colonization, transatlantic slavery, and immigration.

Integrating Cruse and Garvey is based on the differences between Cruse and Garvey, and Cruse's criticisms of Garvey, and the similarities between Harold Cruse and Marcus Garvey, Amy Ashwood Garvey, Amy Jacques Garvey, and UNIA:

Harold Cruse emphasized the importance of creating relevant Black theories and actions, warning that activism without thought can be

counterproductive. The Garveys were strategic, carefully planning their work. Marcus Garvey valued self-education, encouraging reading beyond university knowledge, and emphasized communicating clearly to the masses, as seen when he told Amy Jacques Garvey not to edit his writings to ensure his message was accessible.

Integrating Cruse and Garvey 2:

Harold Cruse encouraged collective political and economic development and criticized Negro Intellectuals for not consistently contributing to the development and advancement of the Black Inner World. Cruse had hope in the transformation of Negro Intellectuals because

Cruse considered Black artists, Black intellectuals, and Black scholars as the core of Black culture and Black progress:

“In advanced societies it is not the race politicians or the rights leaders who create the new ideas and the new images of life and man. That role belongs to the artists and intellectuals of each generation. Let the race politicians, if they will, create political, economic or organizational forms of leadership; but it is the artists and the creative minds who will, and must, furnish the all important content...” (Page 96, *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual*).

Marcus Garvey also invested in the Black Inner World by emphasizing economic self-sufficiency, collective decision-making, and group profit sharing. Garvey believed that

the primary focus could not be individual entrepreneurship: individual profit is not community development or overall Black advancement.

The meaning of culture and art, as expressed by Cruse, was also reflected by The Garveys and UNIA through theater and music as forms of cultural unity and expression, aimed at increasing within-culture control of the arts and other resources and reducing outside control of culture. After being deported back to Jamaica, in 1929 Marcus Garvey founded the People’s Political Party, Jamaica’s first formal

political party, and developed a workers’ rights organization that eventually led to the West Indian labor union movement. Garvey’s adoption of this political approach in Jamaica was people-centered and aligned with Cruse’s proposal to create an all-Black community-wide political party.

An integrated Cruse-Garvey approach helps develop concepts, theories, research, and actions tailored to cultural needs.

For instance, Cruse’s plan in *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual* expands on Du Bois’s 1907 economic cooperation plan and chapter VII of *Dusk of Dawn*, 1940. Du Bois’s cooperative economic ideas surprisingly align with Washington and Garvey’s emphasis on temporary racial separatism for collective black development. Though usually an advocate for racial integration, Du Bois’s support for temporary separation shows common ground amid debates. Recognizing these similarities helps apply the Cruse-Garvey ideas to Black Actions, Solutions, and Progress.

Photo information:

Harold W. Cruse [Prof. of African and African American Studies, Prof. of History, 1968-1984] / HS6107 | Bentley Historical Library: Bentley Image Bank | University of Michigan Library Digital Collections

The Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA-ACL): Hon. Marcus Mosiah Garvey Biography. The portrait is from the Library of Congress: Marcus Garvey “Provisional President of Africa”

Artwork by Sage Gallon



Kimya Nuru Dennis earned her B.A. in political science from the University of Richmond, M.S. in criminal justice from Virginia Commonwealth University, and Ph.D. in sociology with concentrations in criminology and inequality from North Carolina State University. Before living in Baltimore, Maryland, Kimya Nuru Dennis was an associate professor of sociology

and criminal studies and the creator and coordinator of the criminal studies academic program at Salem College in Winston-Salem, NC. Kimya Nuru Dennis’s community outreach, teaching, and research are in mental health, suicide, substance use, epilepsy, community-patient advocacy, law enforcement, permanent childfree-by-choice, developing school curriculum with families and communities, and economic and wealth development.

Preparing Our Students for an AI-Driven Future

BY Akil Kokayi Khalfani

Herbie Hancock - Watermelon Man



Dr. Akil Kokayi Khalfani is a globally recognized Pan-Africanist, sociologist, educator, and ambassador who has dedicated over 25 years to advocating for justice, education, and the preservation of African culture. He is the Director of the Africana Institute and the Center for Global Education and Experiences at Essex County College. He serves as the Pan-African Diaspora Ambassador to the Ooni of Ife. A distinguished author and speaker, he has written "The Hidden Debate," contributed to award-winning sociological publications, and hosted the acclaimed TV show "The Pulse." His academic background includes a Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Pennsylvania and studies in South Africa. An active leader across education, media, politics, and the arts, Dr. Khalfani has received numerous awards and sits on several influential boards dedicated to African empowerment and global social change.

Dear Educators,

[WATCH VIDEO](#)

I'm sharing this video because it powerfully supports what I've been saying for the past two years about the transformative and disruptive power of artificial intelligence (AI):

As faculty and as an academic institution, we face a critical moment. If we keep teaching the traditional way without adjusting to the realities of AI, our students might graduate with degrees but potentially without employment. AI is not just a fad; it represents a fundamental shift that is already affecting every academic discipline, every part of the world, and every aspect of our daily lives. We must start operating with this reality in mind, especially with the arrival of quantum computers, which will make artificial intelligence much faster as it more deeply influences the world around us.

We cannot afford to focus solely on fear—whether it's about students cheating, losing academic integrity, or bypassing foundational skills. Those concerns, while valid, cannot be the sole drivers of our pedagogical or institutional responses. Instead, we must lean into innovation, reimagine our pedagogy, and aggressively prepare our students to navigate, understand, and harness AI as a core competency of their education, regardless of their major.

This urgency must be seen as comparable to our collective response to COVID-19. Back then, we moved quickly and dramatically to change our systems and practices. I understand that some may think this is extreme; however, I believe we now need to summon that same level of commitment and transformation—not because of a virus, but due to the rapid rise of AI that will shape our students' futures and determine our relevance as educators. Otherwise, we risk becoming professionally obsolete.

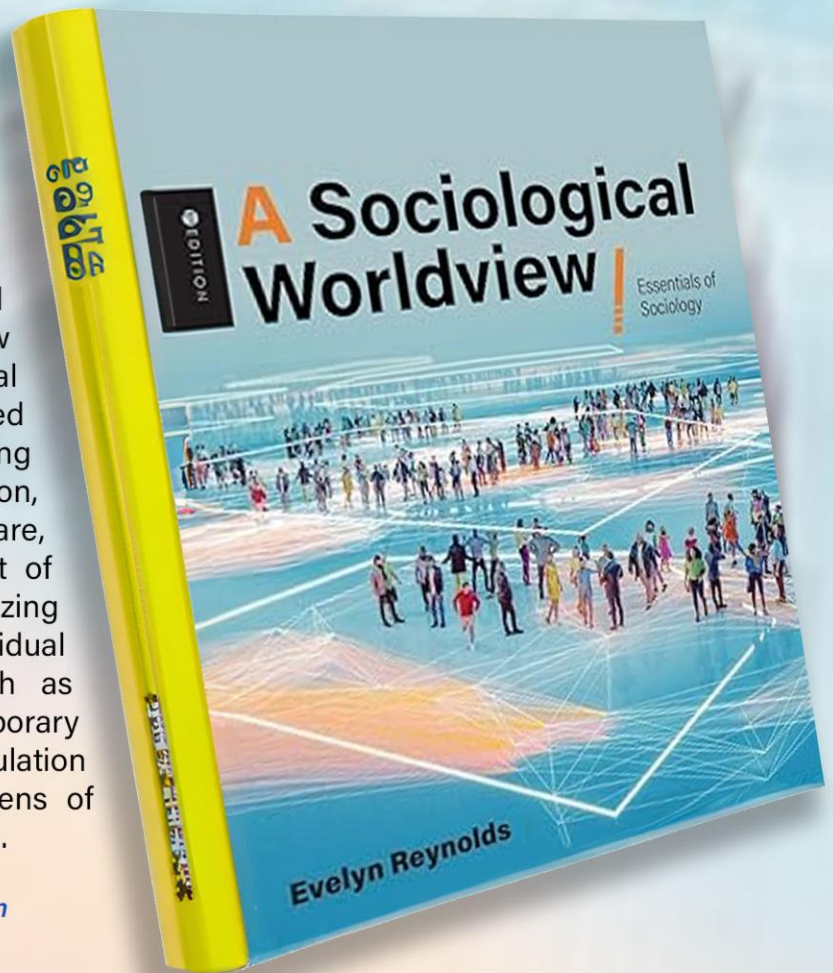
We must work together across divisions and disciplines to ensure that our students and our institution are not left behind. Standing at this critical moment, we have the opportunity and the choice to build a bridge to the other side—either toward an innovative and advanced future or toward one that shows our neglect as educators of our respective fields. Let us choose a future marked by action, innovation, and leadership at the forefront of the next decade.

Introduction to Sociology Textbook Written and Edited by a Black Author

Evelyn Reynolds

A Sociological Worldview: Essentials of Sociology textbook introduces students to the complex layers of human society through a sociological perspective. The book explores the many aspects of social life, starting with an understanding of societal structures and patterns of behavior, and extending to how individual experiences are influenced by cultural context and social forces. The text is organized around key sociological concepts, including cultural norms, socialization, social stratification, and institutions like family, education, health care, and the economy. It traces the development of sociological ideas and their application in analyzing different levels of society, from individual interactions to global systems. Topics such as gender, race, and ethnicity, as well as contemporary issues such as climate change and population dynamics, are also discussed through the lens of theoretical perspectives and empirical research.

SZA - Saturn



THE GRIOT

The Newsletter for the Association of Black Sociologists

Evelyn Reynolds is an Associate Professor of Sociology at Parkland College in Champaign, Illinois, where she has taught for the last 15 years. She teaches Introduction to Sociology courses as well as classes on diversity, gender, social problems, and families. Evelyn has published articles in HuffPost, Truthout, and Next Avenue. She is the editor of A Sociology Reader: Foundational Concepts for the Introductory Student and the author of A Sociological Worldview: Essentials of Sociology.

Sixty Years After The Moynihan Report: What the Data Reveals About Black Families, Work, and Wealth

BY Dr. Lisa LaCon, CRC *Marvin Gaye - What's Going On*



In 1965, Daniel Patrick Moynihan described the “tangle of pathology” in Black families as both a cause and a consequence of racial inequality on behalf of the Office of Policy Planning and Research of the United States Department of Labor. Sixty years later, we can set aside stereotypes and myths while honestly and clearly examining the data. The story since then is not one-dimensional; in fact, it’s quite multifaceted: it’s migration and mobility, education and entrepreneurship, resilience and loss. It also underscores persistent structural gaps that continue even as individual achievements increase. Below is a brief update based on current data from BlackDemographics.com (mainly sourced from the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey and related reports), with short interpretations for those who turn numbers into policy, education, and practice.

Population & Geography

- The Black population has grown and diversified: an estimated 51.6 million Black people lived in the U.S. in 2024, with the strongest growth among multiracial and Black-Hispanic populations. (BlackDemographics.com)
- State and metro patterns continue to shift (Texas, Florida, Georgia, New York, California among the largest state populations), reflecting opportunity corridors and cost-of-living pressures many of us see on the ground. (BlackDemographics.com)

Marriage, Family Structure, and Parenting

- Marriage rates have fallen across America, especially among Black adults. In the 2023 American Community Survey (ACS), 31% of Black Americans were married compared to 48% overall, and 50% had never married compared to 34% overall. Consider this alongside rising age at first marriage and the well-documented economics of partnering in high-cost labor markets. (BlackDemographics.com)

- Among Black Millennials, the data reflects the broader trend: 31% are married, which is roughly the same as the overall Black marriage rate but below the national average for all Millennials. (BlackDemographics.com)
- Children’s living arrangements remain varied: according to a recent detailed breakdown, about 38% of Black children live with married parents and 4% with cohabiting parents; others live with a single mother (never married, divorced, or separated) or in extended family settings. These percentages differ by metropolitan area, housing costs, and local labor markets. (BlackDemographics.com)
- Fertility timing varies by gender: by their 40s, 87% of Black women and 81% of Black men have had children; women are more likely to have their first birth before 25, while men tend to do so after 25—factors that influence schooling and workforce support. (BlackDemographics.com)

Work & Unemployment

- Employment rates for Black adults have risen over the past decade, with Black men at approximately 69% employed in 2022 (up from 66% in 2017) and Black women at approximately 72% (up from 70%). Unemployment rates fell to record lows in 2023 before rising again in 2024, yet they remain better than a decade ago. (BlackDemographics.com)

- Occupational sorting continues: Black workers are still over-represented in production and transportation jobs and under-represented in higher-paying STEM and management positions, with only minor changes in service and sales roles since 2017. These patterns influence both wages and marriage markets. (BlackDemographics.com)

Income & Poverty

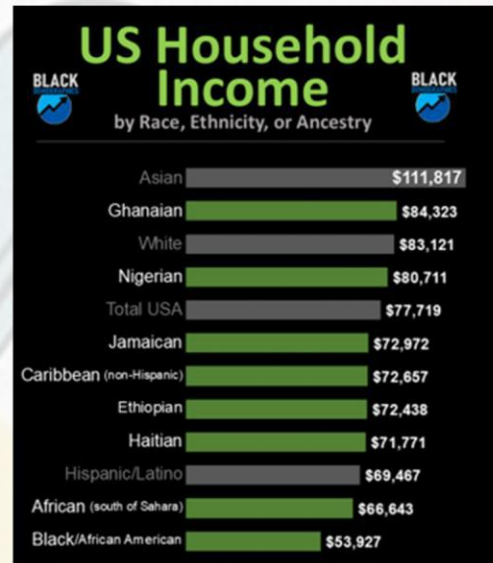
- Income has grown in absolute terms since the Civil Rights era, but disparities remain. BlackDemographics notes that the median income for Black families is about \$28,000 less than the national median. While married-couple Black families earn more than twice as much as female-householder families, this highlights the economic disparity of single-income parenting and the importance of policies like child care, wage floors, and tax credits. (BlackDemographics.com)

- Poverty has decreased from its historical peaks but remains high. One BlackDemographics synthesis shows that about 23% of Black Americans live below the poverty line in recent ACS data, with Black children affected at higher rates. The rate is lower than late-20th-century highs but remains unacceptably high compared to the U.S. as a whole. (BlackDemographics.com)

Housing & Wealth Proxies

- Homeownership acts as a link between income and wealth. Black homeownership is close to 44%, up from 41.4% in 2017, but still well below the national average of about 65% and the White homeownership rate in the 70s. Gains after 2017 were unquestionable, but the pandemic housing boom and interest-rate fluctuations limited them. (BlackDemographics.com)

- Realtor and industry data further suggest that Black buyers are more likely to be first-time buyers, which adds to affordability challenges; this aligns with the broader wealth “gorge” measured through assets, down payments, and intergenerational transfers. (National Association of REALTORS®)



Safety & Loss

- Homicide exposure isn't linear. Historical charts demonstrate peaks in the early 1990s, declines through the 2000s, and pandemic-era spikes, a reminder that public safety is a labor-market, school, and

neighborhood-investment issue. (BlackDemographics.com)

What Changed and What Didn't

What's changed since 1965 is capacity: more education, broader geographic opportunity, significantly higher employment participation, and a larger, more diverse Black population that is moving, creating, and shaping markets. What hasn't changed is the structural arithmetic: the homeownership gap, the decline in marriage alongside uneven wages, and the persistent penalty attached to raising children in single-income households, penalties that are policy-dependent, not destiny-bound. Moynihan asked the nation to examine Black family life, and then, too often, he told a story about culture while avoiding structure. Sixty years later, our task is different: analyze the data, understand the mechanisms, and fund what is effective, thereby focusing on tangible strategies and outcomes. The Black community has evolved, grown, learned, and built. However, as shown, our household income remains at the bottom compared to that of recent migrants to the United States. What's going on? When policy bridges the remaining gorge between income and assets, work and wages, parenting and opportunities, the next sixty years won't unfold the same as the last. Elected in 1976, Moynihan became a Democratic New York State Senator, serving until 2001. Sources (BlackDemographics.com)

- "Black Population in the U.S. Reaches 51.6 Million in 2024." (BlackDemographics.com)
- "Black Marriage in America (ACS 2023)." (BlackDemographics.com)

Sixty Years After The Moynihan Report: What the Data Reveals About Black Families, Work, and Wealth

BY Dr. Lisa LaCon, CRC

- "Data: Black Children—Two-Parent Households & Fatherhood (detail table)." (BlackDemographics.com)
- "Exploring Black Fertility and Family Trends" (2023). (BlackDemographics.com)
- "African American Employment" (trend tables, 2017–2022). (BlackDemographics.com)
- "Black Unemployment Hits Record Low" (context on 2023 low). (BlackDemographics.com)
- "Black Unemployment from Obama to Trump to Biden" (update through Aug 2024). (BlackDemographics.com)
- "African American Income" (family income gap; married vs. female-householder). (BlackDemographics.com)
- "HOUSING" and "The Real Estate Reality: Black and White Homeownership" (homeownership levels). (BlackDemographics.com)
- "Data Chart: Black Homicides from Reagan to Biden." (BlackDemographics.com)
- "Black Population by State" (topline table). (BlackDemographics.com)

THE GRIOT

The Newsletter for the Association of Black Sociologists

WHERE:
New York, New York

WHEN:
August 6-8, 2026

We Are the Ones We Have Been Waiting For:

Using Black Sociological Thought as a Tool of Liberation

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My first ABS Conference! BY Ashley Melcherts

Ashley Melcherts is a Black Surinamese Dutch woman, athlete, sociologist, and a current PhD candidate at Mississippi State University. Ashley is mainly focused on how social inequalities at the intersections of race, ethnicity, and gender influence people's sense of self to better understand how they navigate and resist systems of oppression.

Put Your Records On
- Corienne Bailey Rae

This year, I finally had the chance to attend the Association of Black Sociologists (ABS) conference held in Memphis. For me, Memphis is like "around the corner" as a graduate student at Mississippi State University. My first day at the conference began with an early morning trip from Starkville to Memphis, as Mitchell Grimes and I were scheduled to co-present our work on colorism during the 8 am Race and Identity at the Intersections session. It was wonderful to present our findings in such a welcoming environment and to receive encouraging comments and questions to improve our work. But this wasn't the only session I attended; I felt welcomed and supported throughout my entire time at ABS. There were actually more sessions I would have loved to attend, but my personal schedule was already full. I gained something from every session I attended and was glad I made it a priority to be present for the entire conference. I also had the opportunity to engage with incredible people, for which I am very grateful.

Even though I had heard good things about the conference and was very excited to participate, I never expected that this 2.5-day conference would have such a profound impact on me. Being in community not only with other Black scholars but specifically with fellow Black sociologists was something I needed and also confirmed my place in this discipline. Thank you to everyone who took the time to connect with me by sharing resources, having thoughtful conversations, and speaking encouraging words. I will do my best to stay in touch as much as I can, and hopefully, if everything works out, I will make my way to New York next year.



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COMING
AUGUST 2026
NEW YORK CITY

Du Bois's Black Reconstruction at Ninety

BY Rutledge M. Dennis

Coleridge-Taylor: Hiawatha Overture

W.E.B. Du Bois was right when he called the history of American slavery and the period afterward, the Reconstruction,

'the most magnificent drama in the last thousand years of human history... comparable to the Reformation and the French Revolution.'

As we mark the ninetieth anniversary of this classic study's publication, revisiting it offers a chance to re-read and re-analyze it for ideas and themes that might have been overlooked. Therefore, re-reading a classic work allows us to re-evaluate and perhaps rediscover aspects we missed or underplayed in earlier readings. As professors and researchers, we should not resist the temptation to re-read or re-explore the classics, because doing so may reveal new ideas and themes that we missed the first time.

Among all the themes introduced in the book, the idea of the "General Strike" has been the most studied and explained. This critical idea mainly shows the "self-initiative" and "self-emancipatory" actions of slaves who confidently expressed their desire for freedom. That this significant event happened during "the Great Betrayals" by all involved parties and unexpected forces highlights the disinformation, falsehoods, and outright lies that Du Bois says are among the reasons he wrote the book. Du Bois hoped the book would help scholars move closer to discovering and building a "science of history."

Historians, social historians, and sociologists, however, have not fully explored two areas mentioned in the book. One was Du Bois's brief discussion of the role of Free Blacks in the South, before, and after the Civil War, and during Black Reconstruction. In the South, the Free Black



population was mainly concentrated in Charleston, South Carolina; Richmond, Virginia; Washington, D.C.; and New Orleans. Throughout his many books and articles, Du Bois was often conflicted about the role and responsibility of this group, many of whom would be part of his "Talented Tenth." According to Du Bois, this Black leadership (a) "had wealth"; (b) "had knowledge of group cooperation and group initiative"; and (c) "almost without exception, they accepted the new responsibility of leading the emancipated slaves, unselfishly, and effectively." While eager to give credit to the group for its dedication to Black freedom and leadership, Du Bois also criticized it for what he saw as its shortcomings. These included "lack of clarity on specific economic objectives" for the collective Black population, a belief in "the accumulation of wealth and the exploitation of labor as normal economic activity," and the view that property holdings and economic status were prerequisites for voting rights.

During this pivotal stage in the plight of the Freedmen, the Reconstruction struggle involved a fight to imaginatively and creatively build a world vastly different from the enslaved past toward an unknown but intentionally structured future. This is why more focus should be given to the strategies devised by Blacks during the Reconstruction era to gain freedom from northern and southern white political and economic control. For, as Du Bois wrote, in the North there is "industrial wage slavery," whereas in the South "agricultural slavery"

prevailed. To Du Bois, neither the northern “dictatorship of capital over labor” nor the southern “dictatorship of the slave-owning oligarchy” was acceptable.

Toward the end of Black Reconstruction, Du Bois discusses the movement for economic and political independence and highlights the conventions and associations formed by Black Americans during the Reconstruction Era. More research on these conventions, associations, and organizations, both in the North and South, would significantly advance scholarship. Black conventions took place in Indiana in 1865, another in Louisville, Kentucky, in 1867, and the Equal Rights League met in Pennsylvania in 1865, with a subsequent convention in 1866. A gathering of Black workers occurred in Washington, D.C., in 1867, and a Black Convention was also held there in 1869. According to Du Bois, the 1869 convention called for: a) universal suffrage; b) a national tax to support Black American schools; c) opening public lands to Black citizens; and d) opposition to colonization. As work and the ability to work were vital for collective self-determination, understanding why the National Negro Labor Convention was held in 1869 and why the Colored National Union was established in 1870 is important. Lastly, Du Bois notes the Longshoremen’s Protective Association of Charleston, South Carolina, as “the most powerful organization of the Colored laboring class in South Carolina,”

There is a clear link or many links between leadership within the above associations, conventions, and organizations and the two institutions accredited by Du Bois as instrumental in advancing the cause and the race. Labor and working-class leadership were linked to the two other institutions Du Bois mentions as advancing the race: schools, both public and private secondary and college, and Black churches, which have been pivotal sources of leadership for Black progress. Their major achievements have been two-fold: to abolish the color-line and to create a space that makes it possible for Black Americans to, as Du Bois says, “...build an inner culture.”

Lastly, toward the end of Black Reconstruction, Du Bois raises two theoretical and empirical issues—one he draws from an earlier book, *The*

Souls of Black Folk. That issue concerns the differing personalities of Black northerners and southerners and the sociological implications of these differences for the collective, especially regarding politics and economics. The other issue is within a sub-topic titled “the political success of racial separation.” Ostensibly, he uses the term to describe the racial separation theory of the planter class and poor whites. What’s interesting is that the racial separation theme appears again in more detail in his 1940 book, *Dusk of Dawn*. In this book, Du Bois explains why he proposes an economic plan, the Negro Cooperative Movement, which would be deliberately segregated—seemingly inspired by Booker T. Washington’s economic blueprint. This plan was fervently rejected by the NAACP leadership, and their rejection, along with the bad feelings it caused, led Du Bois to resign and return to Atlanta University as a sociology professor.

Black Reconstruction continues to captivate us because Du Bois skillfully guides us along two parallel paths. One path explores what we hope will become a science of history, while the other delves into an ethnography of history and the literary aspects of history. He achieves this by dissecting the personalities of the diverse characters he places on the historical stage and citing relevant literary poetry and prose to clarify both individual personalities and historical contexts. This approach allows us to experience Black Reconstruction from multiple perspectives, all ultimately aligning with the central theme of the life and experiences of the African who becomes Slave, Colored, Negro, African American, and Black. It also highlights a sub-theme: the many ways a people help shape themselves and how, and why, this collective self-creation continues as an ongoing process that still unfolds today.

The construction concept applies to two worlds: external, involving laws, rules, and social structures that define, control, and limit interactions; and mental, psychological, and sociological, as seen in Du Bois’s analysis of law’s impact on Black lives and the ongoing mental reconstruction during Black Reconstruction. The Black Mind always actively constructs both its external and internal realities, as evidenced by slave narratives and Douglass’s autobiographies. From early African presence to today, the Black Sociological Imagination has been

an activist force, continuously challenging and shaping its world. Du Bois emphasizes the need for a developed and sustained Inner Black Cultural World, only achievable by Black Americans.

Rutledge M. Dennis earned a B.A. in Social Science and Sociology from South Carolina State University, as well as an M.A. and Ph.D. in Sociology from Washington State University. Before joining the faculty at George Mason University, he served as the first Coordinator of African American Studies at Virginia Commonwealth University. His teaching and research interests include the sociology of ideas, theoretical sociology, political sociology, race and ethnic studies, urban communities, and the sociology of W.E.B. Du Bois. He is a past president of the Association of Black Sociologists and has received many honors and awards.



THE GRIOT

The Newsletter for the Association of Black Sociologists





**SAGE
GALLON**

Frank Ocean - Pink & White

THE GRIOT WELCOMES YOUR SUBMISSION

We are writing to invite you to contribute to the ABS newsletter, *The Griot*. We welcome submissions in all forms, including but not limited to poetry, photo essays, art, creative writing, non-fiction essays, recorded interviews (with transcript and/or link), or book reviews. Our word limit is ~750 words.

Topics can include race, gender, sexuality, (dis)ability, immigration, religion, politics, popular culture, art, music, fashion, food, travel, public health (including COVID-19), economics, the environment, tech, social media, gaming, and all things concerning Black folks.

In the Summer 2026 issue, we are especially interested in ABS members' summer reads in a new section entitled "The Griot's Bookshelf", places to travel and why, teaching and pedagogy, spotlights and highlights of your work, and undergraduate perspectives. In the tradition of the Griot, let's share!

We need your submissions by April 1, 2026, to be included in our summer issue. Reach out to ABS Newsletter Editor, Lisa LaCon (llacon@bmiworks.org) with any questions.

SUBMIT HERE: *The Griot: Summer 2026*



THE GRIOT

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