

## Speakers



**Akala** is a MOBO award-winning hip hop artist, writer, poet, educator, label owner and social entrepreneur who fuses a unique rap/rock/electropunk sound with fierce lyrical storytelling. Akala is also known for his compelling lectures and seminars, journalism (Guardian, Huffington Post and the Independent), TV presenting and script-writing talents, and has gained a reputation as one of the most dynamic talents in the UK. He has featured on numerous TV programmes across Channel 4, ITV2, MTV, Sky Arts and the BBC, performing his music and poetry, and speaking on

wide-ranging subjects, from music and the arts to youth engagement and British / African-Caribbean culture. In 2009, Akala launched the The Hip-hop Shakespeare Company, focused on music theatre production, which uses hip hop education workshops to engage young` people with African culture, human rights, racism, the legacy of slavery and the history of hip hop.

**Monica R. Miller** is Assistant Professor of Religion & Africana Studies and Director of Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at Lehigh University. Miller is the author of *Religion and Hip Hop* (Routledge) and co-editor of *The Hip and Religion Reader* (Routledge) and *Religion in Hip Hop: Mapping the New Terrain in the US* (Bloomsbury)—her work has been featured in a host of regional and national media venues. Miller currently serves as a Senior Research Fellow with the Institute for Humanist Studies, contributing editor at *Marginalia*, and is a member of the Culture on the Edge international scholarly collaborative.



**October Dialogues evening keynote: Know Where / Nowhere to Go?: Hip Hop, Black Life, and White Li(v)es in a Post-Civil Rights Era.** In 1903, W.E.B Du Bois asked the tragic question, “how does it feel to be a problem?” Fast-forward, a century later, in an era of black death and illegibility, the “be” in Du Bois’ question has returned: in hip hop artist J. Cole’s 2014 protest-track “Be Free,” Lauryn Hill’s 2014 remix of “Black Rage,” and Eric Garner’s last words “I can’t breathe.” Taking as its departure the racism undergirding the notion of black people as a permanently-fixed underclass, seen as not “human” enough to be thought of as a “be,” this talk focuses on the affirmatively rebellious post-civil rights faith in the flow: the efforts of #BlackLivesMatter and hip

hop to forge mobility instead of black fixity. Dr. Miller will explore how #BlackLivesMatter and hip hop culture both recast tactics of social protest to build global cultural bridges, represent the historically ignored and suppressed, and make new spaces so that those with nowhere to go... know where to go.



**James Braxton Peterson** is the Director of Africana Studies and Associate Professor of English at Lehigh University. His first book, *The Hip Hop Underground and African American Culture* was published on Palgrave Macmillan press (2014). Peterson hosts “The Remix” on Philadelphia’s NPR affiliate, WHYY. “The Remix” is a podcast that engages issues at the intersection of race, politics, and popular culture. Peterson has written for the Huffington Post, The Guardian, Reuters, and The Daily Beast. He is currently an MSNBC contributor and has appeared on MSNBC, Al-Jazeera, CNN, HLN, Fox News, and other networks as an expert on race, politics, and popular culture.

**October Dialogues evening keynote: A Song, A Slogan, and A Service: Dispatches from the Movement for Black Lives.** Dr. Peterson will examine one song, one slogan and one service, in order to offer three updates and insights on the Black Lives Matter Movement: 1) The adoption of Kendrick Lamar’s “Alright” from his 2015 *To Pimp A Butterfly* album as an anthem for the Black Lives Matter movement marries the rapper’s prophetic voice to the Hip Hop generation’s emergence as social activists. 2) One troubling and persistent feature of the Black Lives Matter movement is the challenge to pursue equal justice for women and members of the LGBTQ community, but #SayHerName is a movement within the movement that is challenging the blind spots of Black social justice efforts in the 21st century. 3) While many were organizing around the one-year anniversary of the murder of Michael Brown and the 50-year anniversary of the incredibly prescient Watts riots, Dr. Peterson attended church service at the Emanuel AME Church in Charleston. After the cameras and media are gone, the pain and devastation remain. What now?

**Stafford Scott** has been involved in the Black civil rights struggle since the late 1970s, and has helped many victims of racism over the past 30 years, including the family of Mark Duggan. He was a co-founder of the Broadwater Farm Defence Campaign in 1985, and is now a community activist and Race Advocacy worker responsible for casework across North London. He helped to establish the Tottenham Defence Campaign after the death of Mark Duggan and now coordinates Tottenham Rights. He is also a staff member at the Monitoring Group, a leading anti-racist charity that promotes civil rights, family-led empowerment and



justice campaigns in the UK. He is a regular adviser on racial equality and community engagement and writes for the Guardian.

**October Dialogues closing address: Black Lives Matter in the UK: Reflections on the Past and Future of**

**Rights and Justice.** Has race equality progressed since the death of Mark Duggan and the uprisings of 2011?

What are the lessons of the past for working to address inequality today? How can we empower local

communities to tackle institutional racism? Can knowledge of the history of community struggles inspire new

thinking? What road-maps do the campaigns for justice in Tottenham offer to #BlackLivesMatter? With the

dramatic rise of new media and the creative potential of other political techniques, how can we reinvigorate

traditional forms of political alliance-building and related activities? In a period where equalities, anti-

discrimination and human rights work have come under sustained attack, what new anti-racist alliances and anti-

racist politics can we develop?



**Ella Achola** is part of the Ain't I A Woman Collective, which she

founded in order to build creative spaces for black women's voices,

writing and well-being. Originally from Berlin, she moved to London a

few years ago and has graduated from SOAS, University of London.

She has written about her experiences as an Afro-German woman for

the online platform Media Diversified and OURS Magazine and co-

authored a book chapter in an upcoming anthology in memory of May

Ayim, an Afro-German poet and scholar activist who played a pivotal

role in the subject formation and politicisation of Afro-Germans. She recently delivered a TEDx talk entitled 'How

to Unlearn History'.

**October Dialogue: Ain't I A Woman: Tell Her-Story.** Exploring how diaspora feminisms everywhere are

interlinked through intersectional struggles that are intersectional, this talk outlines a tradition of resilience and the

effort to amplify black women's voices, in particular how black feminists use social media and blogs to tell their

(her)stories. It will draw parallels between the campaigns around #SayHerName, which highlight the female

victims of police violence, and the mission of the Ain't I A Woman Collective, which derives its name from

Sojourner Truth's famous 1851 speech 'Ain't I A Woman', in which she challenged prevailing ideas of

womanhood that excluded black women. The Collective aims to uncover hidden stories of black women from

Europe and beyond and extend the conversation about the black diaspora.

**Joshua Aiken** is a scholar-activist at the University of Oxford in Refugee and Forced Migration Studies. A Rhodes Scholar, he has degrees from Washington University in Political Science and American Culture Studies, and from Oxford in US History. His most recent research project was titled "Picking Up The Gun: Black Resistance, American Citizenship, and the Mulford Act of 1967." Josh was one of the organizers of the November 2014 protest Oxford in Solidarity with Ferguson: Black Lives Matter and considers St. Louis, Missouri home.



**October Dialogue: Black Lives Matter as Social Theory: Distributing Life Chances.** Scholars, politicians, and media personalities for the last two years have asked: what does Black Lives Matter (BLM) mean? Rather than seeing BLM as the subject of analysis, I argue that BLM reveals an analytical tool through which world-ordering systems can be understood and seen. Informed both by critical race theory and the 'life chances' framework of Max Weber, a BLM critique illuminates two logics shortening the lives of black people throughout the world. First, I explore how a BLM critique identifies colonialism as a distributor of life chances. Using life expectancy and infant mortality data, BLM emerges not simply as a global struggle but an anti-colonial one. Second, I explore how BLM excavates racial capitalism as the distributor of lifespan harms. By centralizing how the burgeoning law enforcement regime in the United States actually works, BLM reveals the interlocking schemes of extraction that characterize black life. Rather than accepting the idea that a few poorly trained and implicitly biased police officers are ending lives, a BLM critique draws attention to various arrangements of exploitative harm. I suggest mass incarceration and environmental degradation as two other world-ordering systems that redirect the question of what Black Lives Matter means.



**Kehinde Andrews** is a scholar-activist and a senior lecturer in sociology at Birmingham City University. His research interests are in the fields of race, racism and ethnicity, and community and scholar activism, especially radical approaches to overcoming racial inequality. He recently published the book *Resisting Racism: Race, Inequality and the Black Supplementary School Movement*. and his forthcoming book is *Blackness in Britain*. He co-chairs Britain's Black Studies Association, is an Academic Director of The New Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at The Drum, is the founder and chair of the Organisation of Black Unity, and writes for the Guardian.

**October Dialogue: Black is a Country: Black Radicalism and Contemporary Organising Against Racial Oppression.** Radical is a word often used, and more often misunderstood. It has been applied to a range of

activity from Jihadism to the hyperactive dismantling of the state by the Tories. In truth, there are very few radical analyses, hallmarked by attention to inequalities that are woven into the fabric of society and an argument that society itself therefore needs to be overturned. The Black radical tradition represents a politics that condemns the West as unshakably racist and calls for mass action across the African Diaspora to create an equal society. 'Black is a Country' is a call for a global solidarity that is the starting point for social transformation. Based on current research with the Organisation of Black Unity, this talk will examine the prospects for the Black radical tradition that is reemerging in the 21st century.

**Stephanie Davis** is a scholar-activist at the University of Brighton in the School of Applied Social Sciences. Her current research project looks at Queer and Trans People of Colour (QTPOC) in the UK, focusing on activism, community and affirmation. Queer and trans folks of colour communities are close to her heart, and she is co-founder of Rainbow Noir (Manchester) and QTPOC Brighton. She has been a black feminist activist for many years, has also been involved in protesting deaths in police custody, community action on police harassment, HIV prevention and sexual health promotion in Black communities, and has a burgeoning interest in community accountability strategies. She spoke about the intersections of the Black Lives Matter movement on a panel with Reverend Osagyefo Sekou during the Ferguson solidarity tour in early 2015, and at the Women of the World Festival 2015.



**October Dialogue: Queer and Trans People of Colour Activism and the Black Lives Matter Movement: Resisting the Silences on the Intersections of Race, Gender and Sexuality.** This talk presents the findings of Davis' MPhil/PhD research into queer and trans people of colour (QTPOC) activism in the UK. Specifically it explores the need for intersectional organising for and by those with multiple minoritised identities, the facilitation of space to 'dis-identify' with heteronormativity and white normativity and the processes of decolonising for QTPOC. It draws similarities with the Black Lives Matter movement, in particular the resistance of silences on the intersections of race, gender and sexuality challenging 'westernese' or the 'language of western supremacy'. Under the discourse of westernese, subaltern knowledges and languages are cut off from wider inclusion in local, national and international dialogues. However, both movements push against this discourse of westernese, and refuse to either fragment identities or silence everyday experiences of racism, queerphobia and transphobia.



**Adam Elliott-Cooper** is a scholar-activist in the School of Geography and the Environment at the University of Oxford. His research focuses on how black communities are organising to defend themselves from the police in post-2011 London and Birmingham. He has worked for a number of organisations resisting police violence, including Newham Monitoring Project, Tottenham Defence Campaign, The Monitoring Group and London Campaign Against Police and State Violence. He is associate editor of Ceasefire Magazine, has worked as a writer/researcher for The Voice, The Runnymede Trust, and the Institute of Race Relations, and has appeared on the BBC and Al Jazeera.

### **October Dialogue: Disruption At The Point Of Consumption: How #BlackLivesMatter Changed What**

**Solidarity Looks Like.** Much of the popular wisdom on the left analyses Western liberal democracies as adhering to the demands of capital. Within this context, a strike, the withdrawing of workers' labour power, is an action which attempts to obstruct the circulation and accumulation of capital, is a time-tested tool for both labour organisers and activist groups to leverage demands on state and capital. But the confluence of deindustrialisation, the dismantling of trade unions, and the atomisation and casualisation of work in the Global North, has made large-scale, protracted, and effective strike action an impossible tactic. #BlackLivesMatter movement emerged from young people for whom the logic of neoliberalism was the norm, and through it, new vistas of political resistance have formed. In November 2014, solidarity actions in London brought together families campaigning for justice following a death in police custody, and other activist groups resisting racist police violence. But rather than protesting outside government buildings, town halls or police stations, these protests mimicked those across the Atlantic, targeting commercial shopping districts. First Bond Street and Oxford Circus were shut down by hundreds of protesters, then 76 arrests were made when Westfield, London's biggest shopping centre, was shut down. Activists are no longer able to disrupt capital at the point of production through strike action: this is disruption at the point of consumption.

**Brian Kwoba** is a scholar-activist in History at the University of Oxford, with degrees from Tufts and Cornell universities. His research focuses on the unsung "father of Harlem radicalism," Hubert Harrison, who pioneered the art of soapbox oratory in Harlem, became the first Black leader in the American Socialist Party, a professor of embryology and a lecturer in comparative religion. Harrison was a decisive influence on a whole generation of Black leaders yet remains a virtually unknown historical figure today. Brian is a founding member of Rhodes Must Fall in Oxford, the founder and chair of the Oxford Pan-Afrikan Forum (OXPAF), and a member of the OUSU Campaign



for Racial Awareness and Equality (CRAE). Previously he was an activist with Occupy Boston, has organised for LGBT equality, and worked as a history teacher in primary and secondary schools. He spoke at the Oxford #BlackLivesMatter march last November and organized a #BlackLivesMatter teach-in this past March.

**October Dialogue: Lessons from History: Black Lives Matter and the 2016 Election.** #Black Lives Matter (BLM) is the most visible Black-led movement in a generation. It has galvanized a new generation and presents the opportunity for a historic shift in American race politics. At the same time BLM is facing a huge political challenge with the coming election year of 2016. Republicans have reacted to BLM with threats of violence (Donald Trump) and dismissal (Scott Walker). Hillary Clinton, as the leading Democrat, has said that “Black lives matter” yet she served as a key consultant and supporter of her husband’s 1994 Crime Bill which vastly expanded the prison industrial complex. Every presidential election year, Black people have voted overwhelmingly for the Democrats as the ‘party of the people’ or as the ‘lesser evil.’ Yet this strategy has historically been very damaging to progressive activism because it inevitably pushes organizers to defend a candidate who is auditioning to be CEO of a country founded on colonialism, genocide, and slavery. To its credit, BLM has begun to confront presidential candidates, but will it continue to do so once the call is made to ‘get out the vote’? What lessons from history can BLM apply in order to stay relevant in 2016?



**Althea Legal-Miller** teaches in African American Civil Rights at UCL's Institute of the Americas. She holds a PhD in American Studies from King's College London and is currently working on a book about police and penal sexual violence during the American civil rights movement of the 1960s. Her most recent award is an AHRC International Placement Fellowship (2015-16) for the John W. Kluge Center at the Library of Congress in Washington, DC.

**October Dialogue: #SayHerName: The 1960s Mobilisation against Law Enforcement, Sexual Violence and the Usable Past for Black Lives Matter Movements.** The July 2015 suspicious death of Sandra Bland, 28, found hanged to death in a Texas jail has invited a critical shift in the gendered Black Lives Matter refrain. The #SayHerName campaign – which exposes the marginalisation of black women in the popular rallying call for Black Lives Matter – importantly unveils the brutalisation, incarceration and murders of black women by the state and its agents. Fifty years ago, black female activists also made a vital intervention during the civil rights movement, when they called for police sexual brutality against female activists to be prioritised alongside the right to vote and the integration of public accommodations. This paper will illuminate campaigns, led by Dorothy Height, then president of the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW), to end police sexual violence directed at women and girls involved in the southern black freedom movement of the 1960s. It will argue that this lesser

known civil rights history provides a usable past for contemporary antiracism and antiviolence movements, which must situate the vulnerabilities of racially marginalised women and girls within the Black Lives Matter agenda.

**John Narayan** is a Leverhulme Early Career Fellow at the University of Warwick and an Academic Director of The New Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at The Drum. He completed his PhD at the University of Nottingham. His research interests centre on globalisation and its relationship to social theory and democratic politics. He is currently working on Coloured Cosmopolitanism: The Global Politics of Black British Activism Project, which recovers the history of the British Black Power movement. Although Black Power is synonymous with the US, Britain also possessed its own distinctive form: inspired and informed by its US counterpart, it was also rooted in African, Caribbean and Asian anti-colonial politics, New Commonwealth immigration and the onset of decolonization.



**October Dialogue: The Coloured Cosmopolitanism of Black Power: From the Black Panther Party to #BlackLivesMatter.** The Black Power movement and its constituent groups such as the Black Panther Party have recently gone through a process of historical reappraisal, which challenges the characterisation of Black Power as the violent, misogynist and negative counterpart to the Civil Rights movement. This talk will further this historical reappraisal by highlighting how the Black Panther Party's idea of black empowerment was simultaneously local, national, and international in scope. Indeed, the Party and its ideals were emulated and adapted in places such as the UK, India and New Zealand. The talk will contend that the Black Panthers, and Black Power in general, should be seen as part of the 'coloured cosmopolitanism' of decolonization, which created forms of transnational unity between disparate groups of people in the 'coloured' world. This unity pivoted around opposing racism, imperialism and oppression through an inclusive humanism that called into question the very nature of such a colour-line in the first place. The second half of the talk will reflect on how the history of the Black Panthers holds relevance for contemporary social movements such as the #Blacklivesmatter campaign. This will focus on how the Panthers shifted from the politics of policing to the politics of revolution and how such a history of political praxis holds valuable lessons about how the politics of anti-racism and anti-imperialism could be united in the 21st century.



**Kennetta Hammond Perry** is an Assistant Professor of History at East Carolina University. She received her doctorate in Comparative Black History from Michigan State University. Her research interests include transnational race politics, Black Europe, and the global dimensions of African American history. Her book *London Is The Place For Me: Black Britons, Citizenship and the Politics of Race* examines how Black Britons shaped domestic race politics in postwar Britain by making claims to citizenship against the backdrop of the end of empire and in dialogue with transnational movements for decolonization and Black freedom during the 1950s and 1960s.

**October Dialogue: The Anti-Discrimination Paradox: Race Relations Policy, Policing and the Politics of Black British Citizenship.** Tracing the rise of a global #BlackLivesMatter movement brings into sharp focus the historic connections between movements for racial justice in the US and Britain. This talk revisits the history of grassroots organizing by the Campaign Against Racial Discrimination and the West Indian Standing Conference in response to the passage of the Race Relations Act of 1965. In particular, it examines how activists in these two organizations inserted policing into a public discourse about the structure, content and intent of anti-discrimination policy in Britain during the late 1960s. I argue that by focusing attention on policing as a site of anti-discrimination policy reform, these organizations cultivated a type of anti-racist politics that implicated the power of the state as a provocateur and conduit of anti-Black racial violence. In doing so, these organizations followed in a tradition of Black activism that sought policies that affirmed Black citizenship and accounted for the ways in which the state remained complicit in fomenting the very practices of anti-Black racism that it purportedly sought to regulate through race relations policies rooted in the expansion of equitable access to employment, housing, the consumer marketplace and public resources. Ultimately, it would be the failure to enact anti-discrimination policies in regards to policing that affirmed Black citizenship—acknowledging that Black lives indeed matter—and haunt the nation through the deaths of individuals including David Oluwale, Cynthia Jarrett, Stephen Lawrence and Mark Duggan.

**Imani Robinson** is a British Caribbean / African American activist, writer and creative. She has a degree in International Relations and Anthropology from the University of Sussex and works for the social justice organisation Matters of the Earth, founded by the educator and activist Natalie Jeffers. Matters of the Earth creatively collaborates with activists, communities and organisations to place tools into their hands so they can educate and empower people in self-organising and in strengthening and building movements.



**October Dialogue: "In a world where black lives matter, I imagine...": Movement-Building, Creativity and the Rehumanisation of Black Lives..** Black Lives Matter is an ideological and political intervention in a world where Black lives are systematically and intentionally targeted. It is an affirmation of existence, a collective recognition of the current and historical contributions Black people have made to society. As bell hooks reflects, 'our struggle is also a struggle of memory against forgetting.' We must not lose sight of our place in the struggle, of those who came before us, and of our current reality. Imani will discuss movement-building in this context as a historical black tradition, in particular the importance of rehumanising black lives in creative, innovative and empowering ways. How can we reinvigorate and visualise knowledge for political engagement and social mobilisation of Black communities around the world? Using multi-media, she will interrogate what a world will look like where black lives truly matter.



**Karen Salt** is a scholar-activist and a lecturer in the School of Language and Literature at the University of Aberdeen, where she works on issues of race, sovereignty, power and politics, with a particular emphasis on the interplay of these dynamics in the Caribbean and African diaspora and on the ways that power and racialized attitudes influence decision-making within societies. She routinely interacts with government agencies, local authorities, students, charitable organisations and activists on a range of issues that impact black communities, and is an active national speaker on race and politics, recently appearing as a panelist on the BBC Radio 4 show *In Our Time* and BBC World Service's *News Hour Extra*. She is currently completing two book manuscripts: *All Hail the Queen: Haiti, Black Sovereignty and the Power of Recognition in the Nineteenth-Century Atlantic World*, and *Twilight Islands: Race and Politics Amidst the Caribbean Sea*.

**October Dialogue: Mapping the Roots/Routes of Power: David Oluwale, #BlackLivesMatter and Activism in the Diaspora.** What are the challenges of living after radical political action fails to transform society, whether revolutions in the Caribbean, or the global and diverse Black Lives Matters movement? Examining the arc of the movement, this talk will illuminate the role of adversity, time, tragedy, memory and resistance in the movement's activism (and even existence). Dr. Salt will shift the temporal aspect of the movement back 46 years to the tragic hounding and death of David Oluwale and the subsequent collective activism that emerged around the memorialisation of this injustice. In delving into a longer trajectory of tragedy and justice, she will explore how this past informs the future of #BlackLivesMatter in the UK. What do we risk forgetting in our mapping of 'black lives' and our search for justice if we omit Oluwale's history?

**Kadija Sesay** is the founder/publisher of SABLE LitMag and editor of several anthologies of work by writers of African and Asian descent, including *Dance the Guns to Silence: 100 Poems for Ken Saro-Wiwa*. She led one of the founding member organisations of the Remember Saro Wiwa Campaign. Her first poetry collection *Irki* (2013) will be followed by *The Modern PanAfricanist's Journey*, for which she was awarded a research and development grant from Arts Council England. She recently received a scholarship to undertake doctoral research on 'Raising the Voice and Visibility of Independent Black Publishers' and is currently editing an anthology of essays titled *21 February: The Impact, Progress and Possibilities for a Pan African Future*. Kadija is a Fellow of the Kennedy Arts Centre for Performance Arts Management and has received several awards for her work in the Creative Arts.



**October Dialogue: Black, Bitter and Beautiful: The Role of Poets in Human Rights Campaigns.** When there is a call for justice, invariably there is a call to poets for their voices and their support. What role do poets play? What power does poetry have? In February 2015, Sesay organised the first 'Poetry Against Brutality' event at Goldsmiths University. Two months later, her relative would lose his life due to police brutality. The feedback from the audience was clear: it appreciated poetry as informative, enlightening and educational, and called for more information, particularly on police brutality and deaths in custody in the UK. This is the challenge that audiences present to poets. But is raising awareness and providing information enough? Despite the request for equal attention to be paid to UK cases as to US ones, the awareness and information gap exists even between England and Scotland. With the death of 31-year-old father of two, Sheku Bayoh in Kircaldy, came the realisation of the differences in English and Scottish Law. Is the poet's role of bridging an information and educational gap between continents and countries useful? This talk will highlight poets who have brought the awareness of human rights injustice to the fore, and consider if their voices can reach further today.