

SISAAS Colloquium

Scholars at the Intersection of South Asian and Africana Studies

Saturday, April 8, 2017, 9am-5pm

Armour J. Blackburn University Center Digital Auditorium
Howard University

Keynote Address:

Ngomas for Ethiopian Saints in Gujarat and Minas Gerais:



Bantu Musical Connections in India and Brazil

Dr. Sheila S. Walker

*Executive Director of
Afrodiaspora, Inc.*

Panels:

Language Training and Research Opportunities

Roots and Routes: Labor and Migration in the Indian and Atlantic
Ocean Worlds

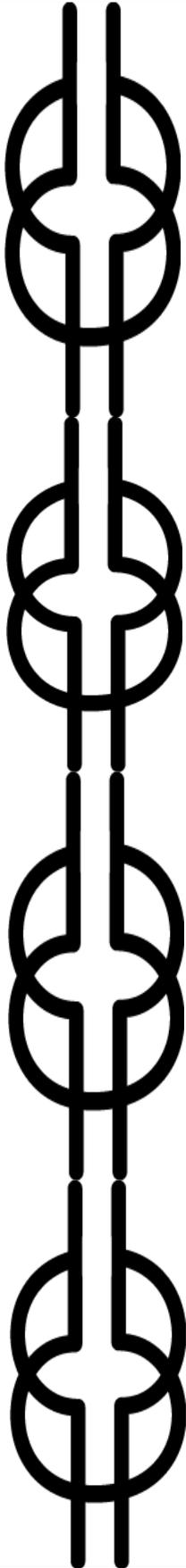
Cultures in Circulation: Music, Religion and Film in Diasporic Contexts

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Center Photo: Sheila Walker. Credit: Arlene Perlman.



Meet the Keynote Speaker



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Cultural anthropologist and filmmaker, Dr. Sheila S. Walker is Executive Director of Afrodiaspora, Inc., a non-profit organization that is developing documentary films and educational materials about the global African Diaspora. She has done fieldwork, lectured, consulted, and participated in cultural events in most of Africa and the Diaspora, and has numerous scholarly and popular publications. Her most recent works are the documentary, Slave Routes: A Global Vision, produced for the UNESCO Slave Route Project, and an edited book, Conocimiento desde adentro: Los afrosudamericanos hablan de sus pueblos y sus historias/Afro-South Americans Speak of their People and their Stories, featuring articles by Afrodescendants from all of the Spanish-speaking countries of South America. She also edited the volume African Roots/American Cultures: Africa in the Creation of the Americas and produced the documentary Scattered Africa: Faces and Voices of the African Diaspora based on the international conference she organized, with the support of UNESCO, on "The African Diaspora and the Modern World." Dr. Walker was Director of the Center for African and African American Studies and Professor of Anthropology at the University of Texas at Austin, then Director of the African Diaspora and the World Program and Professor of Anthropology at Spelman College.

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Colloquium Program

- 9:00am** **Registration and Breakfast** (Room 148/150 in the Blackburn Center)
- 10:00am** **Welcome Address**
Dr. Vernessa White-Jackson, Howard University
Chair, Department of World Languages and Cultures
- 10:05am** **Keynote Address**
10:05am Ngomas for Ethiopian Saints in Gujarat and Minas Gerais: Bantu Musical
Connections in India and Brazil
Dr. Sheila S. Walker, Executive Director of Afrodiaspora Inc.
- 10:35am* Questions from the Audience
- 10:45am** **Language Training & Research Opportunities**
Chair: Dr. Arlene Maclin, Howard University
- 10:45am* American Institute of Indian Studies - Dr. Elise Auerbach
10:55am Critical Language Scholarship - Rhea Vance-Cheng
11:05am South Asian Summer Language Institute - Anne Naparstek
11:15am Awardee Remarks - Kelsey Evans, American Institute of Indian Studies
11:25am Awardee Remarks - Isa Weaver, Critical Language Scholarship Program
11:35am Questions from the Audience
- 11:45am** **Break**
- 12:00pm** **Roots and Routes: Labor and Migration in the Indian and Atlantic Ocean Worlds**
Chair: Dr. Quito Swan, Department of History, Howard University
- 12:00pm* "By Appearance She is an African." A Short History of Africans' Presence in Arabia and the
Mekran Coast Prior to the 1920s
Dr. Alaine Hutson, Huston-Tillotson University
- 12:15pm* Abyssinians in India: Malik Ambar and the Western Indian Ocean World
Dr. Omar Ali, University of North Carolina at Greensboro
- 12:30pm* The Last African Kings in India: The Sidi Nawabs of Janjira and Sachin
Dr. John McLeod, University of Louisville
- 12:45pm* The Other Black Ocean: White Affectivity and Indo-Portuguese Slavery in
Margaret Mascarenhas' Skin
Dr. R. Benedito Ferrão, College of William and Mary
- 1:00pm* Plantation Dispossession: Tracing the Global Travels of Caribbeanity
Dr. Kris Manjapra, Tufts University

- 1:15pm *Questions from the Audience*
- 1:30pm Lunch** (Room 148/150 in the Blackburn Center)
- 2:00pm Documentary Screening**
From Africa... to India: Sidi Music in the Indian Ocean Diaspora
By Dr. Amy Catlin-Jairazbhoy, University of California, Los Angeles
- 2:45pm Cultures in Circulation: Music, Religion and Film in Diasporic Contexts**
Chair: Dr. Michael Nwanze, Department of Political Science, Howard University
- 2:45pm *Sidis at the Crossroads: Faqirs or Cosmopolitans? On Joining the United Nations' "International Decade of People of African Descent"*
Dr. Amy Catlin Jairazbhoy, University of California, Los Angeles
Hamid Sidi, Member of the Sidi Community of Ratanpur, Gujarat
- 3:00pm *African Indian (Siddi) Pentecostals: Identity Formations in South Asia*
Dr. Pashington Obeng, Wellesley College
- 3:15pm *Black, Brown and Blue: Race, Color & Identity in South Asia*
Dr. Kenneth X. Robbins, Collector-Archivist
- 3:30pm *A Desi Love Supreme: Musicking Afro-South Asian Politics with John Coltrane*
Dr. Elliot Powell, University of Minnesota
- 3:45pm *Representing African American Artistry: Black Musicians and Cabaret Culture in 1930s Bombay*
Dr. Bradley Shope, Texas A&M University Corpus Christi
- 4:00pm *MR. INDIA (2015) and Other Lives of "Bollywood" in Africa*
Dr. Samhita Sunya, University of Virginia
- 4:15pm *Goddess Crossing the Dark Waters: Kalimai Worship in the Americas*
Rupa Pillai, PhD Candidate, University of Oregon
- 4:30pm *Questions from the Audience*
- 4:50pm Closing Remarks**
Jazmin Graves, PhD Student, University of Chicago

SISAAS Presenters

Dr. Vernessa White-Jackson is chair of the Department of World Languages and Cultures at Howard University. She is also a professor of German with research interests in the areas of Politics in German and Austrian Literature, 1890-

1980; Alienation, Consciousness and Identity in African-American and East German Fiction; Construction of Black German Consciousness; and Translation.

Meet the “Language Training and Research Opportunities” Panel

Dr. Elise Auerbach is the U.S. Director of the American Institute of Indian Studies. She received her Ph.D. from the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations at the University of Chicago.

(ANHS), Project GO, and the South Asian Flagship Languages Initiative (SAFLI), and has extensive experience working with students and scholars in obtaining funding for both language study and research.

Kelsey Evans was recently awarded the 2014-2015 Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship for Bangladesh. Before beginning her teaching assignment, she and her fellow grantees studied Bengali Language and Culture in-country at the Bangla Language Institute at Independent University, Bangladesh. In 2012, she studied Hindi in Jaipur, India at the American Institute of Indian Studies through a generous grant offered by the Mid-Atlantic Consortium – Center for Academic Excellence. Currently, she works as Program Manager for the NYC Department of Small Business Services and is the Founder of THE ROEW, an online destination for the latest music, art, and culture topics relevant to progressive communities of color.

Rhea Vance-Cheng works on the Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi and Bangla CLS institutes in India. Prior to joining American Councils, Rhea was the Associate Director of Civic & Global Engagement at Mary Baldwin College in Staunton, Virginia, where she supervised the college’s study abroad and international student programs. Rhea holds a B.A. from Mary Baldwin College in Theatre, and a M.A. in Conflict Resolution from Georgetown University. Her M.A. thesis was a discourse analysis of the Kashmir conflict. She completed a CLS for Hindi in 2011.

Anne Naparstek has been the Coordinator for the South Asia Summer Language Institute (SASLI), which is currently hosted at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, for the past six years. During her time with SASLI, she has also worked with the American Institute of Pakistan Studies (AIPS), the American Institute of Bangladesh Studies (AIBS), the Association for Nepal and Himalayan Studies

Isaiah (Isa) Weaver is an undergraduate junior Electrical Engineering major. He has represented the U.S. State Department through the Critical Language Scholarship and as an Alumni Ambassador. Similarly, he has done this with the Mid-Atlantic Consortium Center for Academic Excellence program, a program that funded his first intensive language study in India. Currently, he is founding the startup Açai a FinTech company focused on allowing peer to peer payments and investments.

Meet the “Roots and Routes: Labor and Migration in the Indian and Atlantic Ocean Worlds” Panel

Omar H. Ali is Professor of Comparative African Diaspora History and Dean of Lloyd International Honors College at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro. His latest books are *Malik Ambar: Power and Slavery Across the Indian Ocean World* (Oxford University Press, 2016) and *Islam in the Indian Ocean World: A Brief History with Documents* (Bedford St. Martin's, 2016). A graduate of the London School of Economics and Political Science, he studied ethnography at the School of Oriental and African Studies and received his Ph.D. in History from Columbia University. In 2015 he was named the Carnegie Foundation North Carolina Professor of the Year.

R. Benedito Ferrão is a Visiting Assistant Professor of English and Asian & Pacific Islander American Studies at the College of William and Mary, Virginia, USA. As an Endeavour Postdoctoral Fellow at La Trobe University in Melbourne, Australia, he researched literary representations of African slavery in the Indian Ocean world. An internationally published writer of fiction, non-fiction, op-eds, and academic works, his writing appears in *Outlook India*, *Media Diversified*, *India Currents*, *Mizna*, *AwaaZ*, and *The Goan*, among other publications.

Dr. Alaine Hutson is a full professor currently at Huston-Tillotson University in Austin, TX. Dr. Hutson specializes in African and Middle Eastern

history with an emphasis on slavery and gender in Islamic societies. Dr. Hutson recently was awarded a National Endowment for the Humanities Faculty Award and is a scholar-in-residence at New York University through the Faculty Resource Network as well as a research affiliate at University of Texas at Austin.

Kris Manjapra is the author of *M.N. Roy: Marxism and Colonial Cosmopolitanism* (Routledge 2010), and *Age of Entanglement: German and Indian Intellectuals across Empire* (Cambridge 2014). He is currently writing a book on the global history of plantations, and the trans-continental and inter-imperial entanglements that made industrial agriculture possible. He has received fellowships from the Radcliffe Institute at Harvard University and the Wissenschaftskolleg in Berlin.

John McLeod received his Ph.D. in Indian history from the University of Toronto in 1993. In 1995, he joined the University of Louisville, where he is now a full Professor of History. He served as Chair of the Louisville Department of History for five years, and was the founding Director of the Graduate Program in Asian Studies. Professor McLeod's research specializations include the so-called princely states of India, and two diasporic communities with South Asian connections: Africans in India, and Indians in Britain.

Meet the “Cultures in Circulation: Music, Religion and Film in Diasporic Contexts” Panel

Amy Catlin-Jairazbhoy is an Adjunct Professor of Ethnomusicology at the University of California Los Angeles. Her research, writing, teaching, curatorial activities, and multimedia publications often have an applied focus, aimed at community development of minority traditions, especially in diasporic settings. She served as curator and presented the first concert and lecture tour outside India with a group of African-Indian Sidi performers from Gujarat, in September 2002, traveling with them in England and Wales. Her recent multimedia publications include *Sidi Sufis: African Indian Mystics of Gujarat* (Apsara Media 2002: 79-minute CD), the DVD *The Sidi Malunga Project* (2004), and the DVD *From Africa to India: Sidi Music in the Indian Ocean Diaspora* (with Nazir Ali Jairazbhoy) (2003).

Pashington Obeng is a Professor of Africana Studies at Wellesley College specializing in Indian Ocean & Transatlantic African Diaspora studies, Anthropology of religion in continental Africa & New World Afro-Atlantic areas, and cultural communication focusing on Black filmic representations. He has also published numerous articles on anthropology of religion, culture, and African Diaspora studies. His present and ongoing work involves researching the cosmologies and life ways of African Indians of Karnataka in South India.

Rupa Pillai is a PhD candidate in the department of Anthropology at the University of Oregon. She is interested in the intersection of religion, ethnicity and movement. Her dissertation, “Caribbean Hinduism on the Move,” explores how the growing Indo-Guyanese Hindu community in New York City adapts and mobilizes Hinduism in this second migration, first from the Indian subcontinent and

second from the Caribbean, to carve a space for themselves within the social landscape of New York City. She is the coordinator and a producer of AnthroPod, the podcast of the Society for Cultural Anthropology.

Elliott H. Powell is an Assistant Professor of American Studies at the University of Minnesota. He has been the recipient of numerous fellowships, grants, and other awards from the Social Science Research Council, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the Ford Foundation, and the International Association for the Study of Popular Music. He is currently at work on his book manuscript entitled *The Other Side of Things: African American and South Asian Collaborative Sounds in Black Popular Music*. The book brings together critical race, feminist, and queer theories to consider the political implications of African American and South Asian collaborative music-making practices in U.S.-based jazz, funk, and hip hop since the 1960s.

Kenneth X. Robbins is a collector-archivist specializing in topics like maharajas and other local and regional Indian rulers as well as Indian minority groups. He has studied African elites in India utilizing coins of the 15th century Habshi Dynasty of Bengal; 17th century Deccani Sultanate paintings of African strongmen, generals, and prime ministers; and 19th-20th century photographs, paintings, and documents of the Nawabs of Janjira and Sachin. Dr. Robbins is co-editor of the book *African Elites in India* and co-curator of a New York Public Library Schomburg Center traveling exhibition *Africans in India*, which continues to be shown worldwide at venues like the United Nations and UNESCO.

Dr. Bradley Shope's research addresses popular music in India. He has published two books, and several book chapters on the history of western popular music in North India. Dr. Shope has travelled to and lived in North India on numerous occasions, collecting hundreds of personal history narratives from now elderly individuals involved in the production and consumption of popular music in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s. His research focuses on the cities of Lucknow, Mumbai, and Kolkata.

Hamid Sidi is a member of the Sidi (African Indian) community of Ratanpur, Gujarat, in Western India. From 2001 to 2008 Hamid worked as the manager of a music dance troupe under the banner of KAPA Productions (manager Katerina Pavlakis). This group performed the traditional religious rituals of the Sidi Goma throughout Europe, Africa and North America, including at the WOMAX 2003 in Spain. During this time he also

worked as a research assistant with anthropologists conducting fieldwork on the Sidi community. In 2009 Hamid came to the US and in 2012 he became a US resident. He continues to work on promoting awareness and advancement of the Sidi community in India and abroad.

Samhita Sunya is an Assistant Professor of Cinema in the Department of Middle Eastern & South Asian Languages & Cultures at the University of Virginia. Her research and teaching interests include world film history; Asian cinemas; media archaeology; and sound studies. Current and planned publications include a book project and essays that build on research conducted at the National Film Archive of India as well as archives in Beirut, exploring transnational circuits and histories of Hindi film/songs.

SISAAS Organizers

Elise Auerbach is the U.S. Director of the American Institute of Indian Studies. She received her Ph.D. from the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations at the University of Chicago.

Nick Gottschall is an international higher education professional with a focus on South Asia. His experience of working, studying, and traveling in India has included recent stints as a Fulbright English Teaching Assistant in New Delhi, and, along with his wife, as producer of a series of promotional videos for the American Institute of Indian Studies (AIIS). In addition to serving as Media and Communications Specialist with AIIS, he currently works as a consultant for the Council of American Overseas Research Centers (CAORC) and the University of Washington's Jackson School of International Studies, where he received an MA in South Asian Studies in 2015.

Jazmin Graves is a doctoral student in the South Asian Languages and Civilizations Department at the University of Chicago. Jazmin earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Columbia University in the City of New York in 2013, graduating *magna cum laude* as a Middle Eastern South Asian and African Studies major with a Linguistics concentration. Jazmin's research concerns premodern Indo-Muslim literature, with particular focus on the Islamic devotional tradition of the Sidis of western India.

Dr. Arlene P. Maclin is internationally recognized and recently chronicled in *The Historymakers* for her outstanding achievement as an educator, researcher, administrator and mentor. Dr. Maclin is

a physicist by training and has spent the past 30 years in a combination of academic and government service positions. Her academic service includes more than 15 years of teaching at the levels of associate and full professors with administrative experience at the level of an associate dean of a college of arts and science, and a director of research. She is an active recruiter of undergraduate and graduate students for STEM programs throughout the nation.

Grace Olubowale is a junior at Howard University, majoring in Political Science and minoring in English. Last summer, she studied as a Gilman Scholar at the American Institute of Indian Studies in Jaipur, India. She is very passionate about Indian culture and language.

Megan Preston is a sophomore at Howard University, majoring in Biology and minoring in Chemistry. Although Megan is a STEM major, she has a passion for learning about all languages and cultures, and she will continue that this summer through study abroad in Colombia and New Zealand. Her passion for the Indian culture was ignited after studying as a Gilman Scholar at the American Institute of Indian Studies in Jaipur, India this past summer.

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