
General Information

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FREEDOM:
A JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN AFRICANA STUDIES

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A JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN AFRICANA STUDIES

**A BOWIE STATE UNIVERSITY DU BOIS CENTER
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Freedom is published under the auspices of a grant from the Mellon Foundation under the auspices of the BSU Du Bois Center for the Study of the Black Experience (CSBE) and the Department of History and Government, with the assistance of an editorial/advisory board.

The purpose of *Freedom* is threefold: first, to emphasize the relevance of Africana Studies to contemporary life, focusing particularly on the experiences of communities of African descent in the Americas; second, to facilitate the dissemination of scholarship on Africana Studies; and third, to foster international perspectives in an era of increasing globalization and intercultural contacts. This inaugural issue addresses the question: how have Black people approached and engaged with liberational theory and praxis to secure self-determination both historically and contemporarily? This journal specializes in interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research focusing on the lived experiences of the Black Diaspora

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Statement from the Editor

From Dr. Sheneese Thompson, Editor

Freedom: A Journal of Research in Africana Studies

Every experiment of such a kind, however, where the moral standard of a people is lowered for the sake of a material advantage, is dangerous in just such proportion as that advantage is great.

—W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Suppression of the African Slave Trade, 1638–1870*, (1896)

One hundred and thirty years ago, a 28-year-old Du Bois tackled the legal, economic, social, and moral implications of the African Slave Trade in America in his first published work of writing. As the United States celebrates its semi-quincentennial, reflects upon its history, and notes its global impact, the writings of Du Bois are prescient and useful in guiding us away from the folly of repeating mistakes of the past, and they encourage us to treat the moral stains of Indigenous genocide African enslavement as the cardinal sins of America from which all other human rights violations emerge. After all, American democracy is an experiment of a kind, and as citizens, servants, students, and scholars of this nation, we can, and should, ask ourselves—how dangerous is this experiment, and how much have we lowered our moral standards to preserve it? In the last year society has seen a meaningful increase in imperial violence in service of settler colonialism, nativism, xenophobia, and the greed of “developed” countries accompanied by an erosion of rights in the United States that could determine that the American experiment is ultimately a failure. In a news environment which has privileged perspectives that perpetuate master narratives predicated upon the fact that only a narrow swath of the citizenry are people with the rights and privileges therein, and an academic environment where centuries-old institutions have sacrificed intellectual freedom on the altar of survival, *Freedom: A Journal of Research in Africana Studies*, remains committed to telling the truth of the global Africana experience despite the naked hostility toward the humanity of the Black world.

The submissions in this volume are arranged borrowing from Dr. Greg Carr's conceptual categories as follows: Movement and Memory, Social Structure, Science and Technology, Cultural Meaning-Making, and Ways of Knowing. While there is quite a bit of overlap between these categories, and the authors journey across them, this journal values the disciplinarity and inter-disciplinarity of Africana Studies and sees the academic merit of employing disciplinary frameworks in organizing the discourse we publish.

While Movement and Memory can literally be interpreted as the physical relocation of people across time and space, I am interpreting it here to refer to the movements toward liberation and the important work of remembering them. This volume opens with an important re-framing of Du Bois's scholarly work titled, "Freedom and Unfreedom in the Black Belt: Du Bois as Proto-Criminologist," by Shuntavia N. James. It is followed by "Confronting Police Aggression: The NAACP's Legal Advocacy Work during the Great Migration," by Adam Lee Cilli, which provides an important reflection on efficacious strategies that should be revisited in this legal climate. "Labor as Liberation: The Pullman Porters and the Black Intellectual Legacy Model," by Rashid Faisal reminds us of the genius of A. Phillip Randolph, the power of organizing, and the necessity of mutual aid. "Murder in Kenansville: Black Liberation Struggles in Antebellum North Carolina and the Kenan Legacy of Violence," by Melissa Story recounts and analyzes the importance of a lesser-known slave rebellion that occurred in 1831, reaffirming that freedom was always on the minds of enslaved Africans, and despite their oppression, the meant to pursue it at all costs.

Social Structure as a category asks us to think through both how Africans peoples constructed society before their encounter with Europe and how they have engaged and disengaged with it after. Bryan Jack's, "From 'The Bottoms' to the Top: Jazz Musician Wilbur (Buck) Clayton and Segregated Life in Parsons, Kansas" uses Clayton's life as a case study to explore how the limitations of Jim Crow both foreclosed opportunities for Black people in the American South and encouraged creativity among Black people who rejected a small life. It also debunks the myth of segregation and a distinctly Southern problem and implicates the Midwest as a part of the national problem of anti-Black racism. Following this, Leland Royce Harper and Adele Okoli examine diasporic approaches to the linguistic limits of an oppressive North American social structure in their article, "Codecloseting, *Opacité*, and the Racialized Politics of Linguistic Performativity." Ashley Melcherts expands

this even further, traversing between Social Structure and *Ways of Knowing* in, “Insider/Outsider: Black Surinamese Dutch Women in Predominantly White Educational Institutions,” which unpacks the psychological and epistemic harms Black women face in a nation that purports to view racism as retrograde.

Science & Technology captures the contributions of African peoples in these arenas as well as their answers to developments which either further marginalize Black people or ignore them entirely. In this volume, it was critical to address the challenge of generative AI. Kweli Zukeri and Brielle Brookins bring forward the need for cultural grounding and historical orientation in their article, “Critical Consciousness Development & Preservation in Black Youth in the Era of Generative AI.” Similarly, Symone Campbell and Semaj Campbell-Blakes insist on the importance of centering existing Black technological traditions in the face of rapid advancement in, “Our Stories in the Code: A Tradition of Black Education and the Ethics of AI Learning Technologies.”

Serving as a bridge to the second half of the volume, Cultural Meaning Making includes a poem by Daejianna Clairborne entitled, “The Classroom Is a Clearing.” It rightfully frames the classroom as well as the acts of teaching and learning as sacred. It is an apt transition to *Ways of Knowing* which engages with the educational world of African people. It opens with Andrea Ringer and Sekh Maat’s “The Struggle to “Think. Work. Serve.’: Reflections on Africana Studies at “Tennessee State University” in the Age of the Geier Case,” which offers an important reflection on the various vulnerabilities of institutionalized Africana Studies, particularly in a political environment that has proven antagonistic to the study of Black life, history, and culture. Sumanth Reddy’s, “Exploring Congo Cultural Heritage in Panama: Insights from an Immersive Study Abroad Program,” highlights not just the arduous work of Afro-Panamanians in preserving their traditions, but also the educational value that immersion provides HBCU students in developing their own pride in their heritage as well as a more global orientation toward the cultural connectivity of Black peoples throughout the African diaspora. Charles Cole’s, “Empowering Agency Over Grit: Cultivating Academic Success and Identity Among Black Males Through the A.N.D. Model,” advocates for pedagogies that centers the humanity of Black male students and dispenses with deficit models that presuppose their failure. Britany J. Gatewood, Joy S. Jones, and Kathaleena E. Monds focus on families that

have returned to Ways of Knowing that empower their students instead of oppressing them in their article, “‘It’s Not Just Black Culture, It’s Home Culture:’” The Engaged Detroit Homeschool Co-op.” Last but not least, this section closes with Charles E. Becknell, Jr.’s, “Africana Borderlands Ways of Knowing: The Black Church and Knowledge Practices in New Mexico’s Borderlands” examines the spiritual and intellectual practices of an understudied segment of the Black American community, and argues that in the Southwest, the Black church serves a critical epistemological function in the absence of other institutions and in the presence of concerted efforts of historical erasure.

This volume closes with reviews of Christina Sharpe’s *In The Wake: On Blackness and Being* (2016), which deserves to be revisited on its ten-year anniversary, Harmonia Rosales’s debut, *Chronicles of Ori: An African Epic* (2025), which seriously engages the Ways of Knowing of Yoruba people, and Sheneese Thompson’s, *Oshun, Lemonade & Intertextuality: Afro-Atlantic Religion in Black Popular Culture* (2025), which examines how Black Cultural Meaning Making is informed by African Ways of Knowing.

I extend my sincere appreciation to the editorial board and contributors in this volume, and with it, I hope to honor the grand legacy of W.E.B. Du Bois, upon whose shoulders we stand. I ask readers of this volume to consider how 130 years later, we can use Du Bois’s revelatory words as well as those of the contributing authors as tools to think through and undo the retrenchment of civil and human rights in the United States and in the world.

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VOLUME IV

Call for Papers

Manuscripts Due: November 30, 2026

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Our editorial board invites you to submit manuscripts for research articles, book reviews, and poetry. Research articles should be limited to between 3,000 and 5,000 words; book reviews should be limited to 1,500 words. All written submissions should follow the most recent Chicago Manual of Style. Submissions should be emailed as a word document to duboiscenter@bowiestate.edu. Please remove your name, institutional affiliation, and any other identifying information from your complete manuscript for review.

The deadline for manuscript submissions is November 30, 2026. Authors will be notified that their manuscripts have been accepted by January 31, 2027. Volume IV will be published in July 2027. If you have questions about the journal or submitting to it, please email duboiscenter@bowiestate.edu attention Dr. Karen Cook-Bell, Managing Editor.

"For Jessie Redmon Fauset (1882–1961)"

Margaret Stetz

*Professor of Women's Studies
University of Delaware*

long pearls dangling
silk skirt swinging
buckled polished shoes
pounding 1920s New York pavements
rushing after editing
The Crisis
home again
to write about the
crisis of a woman
longing for a beauty that was
lasting
Black
not passing
raced and not erased—
in her novel
Plum Bun
Angela from Philly
became *Angèle*
with painter's brush
the stroke that sold her
in the market
until sick of being priced
and bartered
she escaped to Paris
(though her creator
chose to stay and battle
in a nation
where the Fruits
of so much labor
were Strange
and sometimes hanging)

When Langston Hughes
had called himself
an “Aesthete”
seeking Life in capitals
walking Harlem streets
looking into faces
finding subjects/objects
for his art
did he know
the bodies boldly
standing ground
and unconfined
demanding space
those women staring back
like Fauset’s Angela
were Angels of the Renaissance
all trying hard to fly
as high as he—
were artists too?

Dear Lord, Why Me?

Craig Jordan

Vanderbilt University, Peabody College

Story of a man, supporting the best way as a fan.
Strolled to a game, Wheaney said no ID.
Sir, you're not a teacher.
Want in? 5 dollars.

Flip of a switch—Dear Lord, why me?
Would this be happening if I was a white man in the bleacher?
Man oh man we need a preacher.

You're under investigation. Investigation. Investigation.
You are of no relation. No relation. No relation.
And we want no relation. No relation. No relation.
Now you're hostile. Hostile. Hostile.
Subject you to my vile. Vile. Vile....
No rights, don't fight, fight, fight.
All because you're not white. Not white. Not white.

Perseveration is real. Boy here go take a pill.
For in this world no time to heal.
Just trying to keep it real.
So you better learn to chill.
Or we'll knock you off this hill.

Back into the world, no one wants you.
If you were of value, we'd flaunt you.
But you're not, so we stand and we mock you.
Right to your face, you're a target, ya I said we'll mock you.
Put your face on our project, audacity to name you "Had ID!"
Despite the fact that we knew you asked—Dear Lord, why me?

