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## SPOTLIGHT DONOR: THE TIMMONS FAMILY

This issue's Spotlight Donor is the Timmons Family, founded by Beulah Tindal and SFC (ret) Edward Moses Timmons of Florence, SC. Members include:

- Patricia Timmons-Goodson,
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- Dr. Ernest Goodson,
- Patricia Kornegay Timmons,
- Maj. Edward Timmons, Jr., and
- Tianna Smith Timmons

Following Edward's honorable discharge from the US Army in 1969, they settled in Fayetteville, NC. As staunch believers in education, they stressed its importance to their six children. As a result, all six attended schools in the University of North Carolina system and attained multiple degrees. The Timmons family has supported the Stone Center with various gifts throughout its history and we are proud and pleased to have their continued patronage.

## CHECK US OUT ON VIMEO!

Did you miss a "can't-miss" Stone Center event or lecture? Don't worry – you can view video from Stone Center lectures, programs and special events on our Vimeo page. Vimeo is a platform used to upload video content and share it on the Internet.

We've upgraded our account so that we can share more content. You can now access videos from past programs and lectures as well as current content from our most recent events.

Check us out at: [vimeo.com/stonecenter](https://vimeo.com/stonecenter)

# MILESTONES

THE SONJA HAYNES STONE CENTER FOR BLACK CULTURE AND HISTORY

spring 2019 · volume 16 · issue 2

[www.stonecenter.unc.edu](http://www.stonecenter.unc.edu)



WILLIE MAE "BIG MAMA" THORNTON ▶

## HOUN' DAWG: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF BIG MAMA THORNTON PERFORMANCE HIGHLIGHTS SPRING 2019 PROGRAMMING

On March 1 at 7pm, the Stone Center will present a solo dramatic performance by multi-talented performer Azusa SHESHE Dance entitled *Houn' Dawg: The Life and Times of Big Mama Thornton*. This production is part of the Stone Center's 30th anniversary celebration and is made possible through the support and joint efforts of: the Carolina Womens Center, the African, African American and Diaspora Studies Department, The Center for the Study of the American South, the Communications Studies Department, the Center for Dramatic Art, the LGBTQ Center and the Carolina Black Caucus. Community partners include Ngozi Design of Durham and the Rogers-Eubanks Neighborhood Center.

The production chronicles the life of Willie Mae "Big Mama" Thornton, who was the first to record the iconic song "Hound Dawg" in 1952. Her version held the number one spot on the R&B charts for seven weeks in 1953. Thornton, born in Ariton, Alabama on December 11, 1926, had a commanding presence when she took to the stage. She brought a powerful, gospel- inflected voice that rocked audiences wherever she appeared. That talent, combined with the risqué lyrics that peppered her songs and a penchant and preference for men's clothes, made her a presence to be reckoned with in the male dominated blues and R&B world. She transgressed other norms when she consistently refused to conform to the sexual norms that prevailed during that period. In addition to "Hound Dawg", commonly associated with Elvis Presley who achieved success with the tune in 1956, she also scored a hit with "Ball and Chain", successfully covered by Janis Joplin in 1967. Her

straight-ahead, hard-driving performances continued throughout her life until she died of a heart attack in Los Angeles, California, on July 25, 1984 at the age of 57.

Thornton was inducted into the Blues Hall of Fame in 1984 and "Ball and Chain" was selected for the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame's list of *500 Songs that Shaped Rock and Roll*.

A native of Chattanooga, Tennessee, Azusa SHESHE Dance, like many artists and performers, grew up singing in church. For her, it was Allen Temple African Methodist Episcopal Church. She also studied classical music in the local school system and went on to attend the Tennessee Governor's School of the Arts. She is a graduate of the University of Tennessee, Chattanooga. After performing on stage in regional productions she moved to New York where she has been active in the theater scene and captured roles in productions at the 13th Street Repertory Theater, the MTA: Music Under New York Program, The Connelly Theater at Columbia University, and the Jamaica Performing Arts Center BRAATA Productions presentation of the original Caribbean musical *Welcome to America*. Dance's portrayal of Big Mama Thornton was previously staged at The Camp House, the United Solo Theater Festival, and Bessie Smith Hall.

*Houn' Dawg: The Life and Times of Big Mama Thornton* will be presented in the Stone Center's theatre on March 1 at 7 pm. To reserve tickets, go to the Stone Center's website at [stonecenter.unc.edu](http://stonecenter.unc.edu).



## 2019 AFRICAN DIASPORA LECTURE AND ROUNDTABLE FEATURES EXAMINATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE RISE, FALL AND STRUGGLE OF BLACK BOOKSTORES

Recent scholarship has rediscovered the pioneering role of Black bookstores, an often-overlooked element in the story of Black community development and Black empowerment in the United States. The Stone Center's 2019 African Diaspora Lecture and Roundtable brings together former and current bookstore owners from around the country and places them in conversation with activists and scholars who have examined their history. Black bookstores were central in the politics and activism of Black communities in the United States in the years leading up to the Civil Rights Movement and the subsequent development of other movements centered around Black Power, Black nationalism, Black Internationalism and Pan-Africanism. In the 1970's and 1980's Black feminists, as well as Black gay and lesbian activists/artists, also found Black bookstores to be a formidable weapon in fighting for recognition and rights.

In many ways, these establishments became much more than depots for purchasing canonic and new writing from Black authors. Many quickly established themselves as cultural centers and political gathering places where the most important issues of the day were discussed debated and challenged. This last role contributed greatly to their coming to the attention of U.S. national intelligence agencies.

The African Diaspora Lecture and Roundtable will feature a presentation by Professor Joshua C. Davis whose recent book, *From Head Shops to Whole Foods: The Rise and Fall of Activist Entrepreneurs* (Columbia University Press, 2017), includes a chapter entitled "Liberation Through Literacy: African American Bookstores, Black Power, and the Mainstreaming of Black Books." Davis' research included extensive review of FBI files and additional interviews with



the owners of Black bookstores. His work, featured in the Atlantic ("The FBI's War on Black-Owned Bookstores", February 19, 2018) concluded that there had been an organized campaign to undermine the key and central role of Black bookstores in Black community life.

Davis will be joined by several activists and former and current bookstore owners including Geri Augusto, formerly affiliated with Drum and Spear Bookstore in Washington, D.C. and currently Gerard Visiting Associate Professor of International & Public Affairs and Africana Studies, Brown University; Shirikiana Gerima, co-founder of Sankofa Bookstore, Washington, D.C.; Ed Vaughn, founder and former owner, Vaughn's Bookstore, Detroit, Michigan; Clarence Lusane, former employee,

Vaughn's Bookstore, Detroit, Michigan and currently Professor and Chair, Political Science Department, Howard University; Paul Coates, Founder-Owner of Black Classic Press; Yvonne Blake, owner, Hakim's Bookstore, Philadelphia; Karen Johnson, Co-owner, Marcus Books, Oakland California; and Michael Simanga, Lecturer, African American Studies, Georgia State University and author of *Congress of African People: History and Memory* (Palgrave Press, 2014). Other former bookstore owners will be in attendance and will join in the audience discussion.

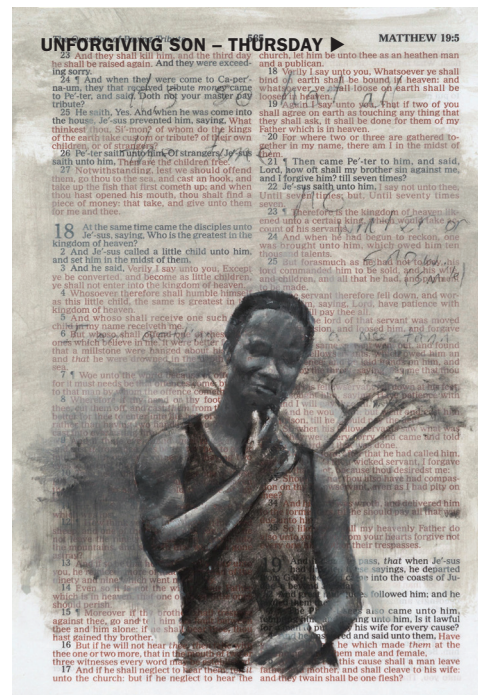
The 2019 African Diaspora Lecture-Roundtable will take place in the Hitchcock Room of the Stone Center at 6:30 pm on Friday, March 29. This program is free and open to the public but reservations are encouraged via the Stone Center website.

## SPRING EXHIBITION HIGHLIGHTS FATHER AND SON'S SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION

The Stone Center's spring 2019 exhibition will feature Greensboro-based artist Charles E. Williams. This show, entitled *Black River*, includes deeply personal works comprised of paintings, photographs, ready-mades, and videos. Works in the show bear witness to moments that chronicle his father's personal struggles that challenged him as a son and tested his own spiritual beliefs. At the age of 15, Williams witnessed his father's spiritual transformation, which subsequently set him on a quest to excavate other portions of his family's history.

In effect, Williams' father's transformation signaled the beginning of his own spiritual journey and he sought to reveal his own history through metaphorical narratives in the form of modern-day parables, derivative of similar parables found in the Bible. These recreated parables, represented in *Black River*, collectively reference a radical act of forgiveness enacted between father and son.

These ideas are explored through pieces such as *Parable of the Unforgiving Son* which shows how one can exercise understanding, forgiveness, and come to acknowledge



the innocence of the perpetrator. Another piece, entitled *Parable of Tough Love*, explores the duality of the use and purpose of the tree, of hewing wood, and the hard work it takes for converting wood for multiple uses, whether chopping firewood to warm the house and cook, or to select a perfect switch, for mending out punishment.

Charles E. Williams is a native of Georgetown, South Carolina but has called North Carolina home for many years. He holds a Bachelor of Arts from the Savannah College of Art and Design and a Master of Fine Arts from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Williams' work has been in demand because of its intensely introspective and imaginative nature

which is expressive of both a new generation and a treasured community legacy. His resume includes residencies at Soma in Mexico, the Otis College of Art and Design in Los Angeles, the McColl Center of Art and Innovation in Charlotte, North Carolina and the Gibbes Museum of Art in Charleston, South Carolina.

Williams' *Black River* opens on Tuesday, January 22 at 7pm in the Stone Center's Robert and Sallie Brown Gallery and Museum. The show is free and open to the public.

## THE STONE CENTER FALL 2018 ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION BRINGS TOGETHER CAMPUS, COMMUNITY AND ALUMS



The Stone Center's fall 2018 anniversary celebration brought together over 2,500 participants and well-wishers during an eventful run of programming. The kick-off of the season occurred on September 23 with the featured presentation of *Countdown at Kusini* at Chapel Hill's famous Varsity Theater on Franklin Street. *Countdown at Kusini*, one of the most significant Black productions of the last 100 years, was developed and produced by Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc in 1976. The Stone Center's screening was only the second time it had been screened since its withdrawal from circulation in 1976. The screening included a presentation by filmmaker S. Torriano Berry whose documentary, *The Kusini Concept: The Pride and the Sabotage*, chronicled the unfortunate circumstances that contributed to the demise of the film and its forty-year disappearance. The Stone Center's screening of *Countdown at Kusini* was intended to recover this history and to celebrate this important achievement by the Deltas and to acknowledge their role in promoting serious images of Africa and its Diaspora.

The 2018 Diaspora Festival of Black and Independent Film featured 26 films from Trinidad and Tobago, the Congo, the U.S., Colombia, Ghana, the United Kingdom, France and Nigeria. Several screenings were held in off-campus locations with Stone Center partners including Ngozi Design in Durham. This year's theme, "Our Diaspora: Where Every Life is an Epic Story", spoke to our interest in raising the life stories of the Diaspora's ordinary, everyday inhabitants who are often the object of representations devised by others, but rarely centered in their own life stories.

The 2018 Sonja Haynes Stone Memorial Lecture showcased the considerable talents of noted jazz artist Nnenna Freelon. Freelon, an award-winning performer and educator brought a finely crafted presentation to the Stone Center's Hitchcock Room where she weaved personal stories, African American and Diaspora history, poetry and song into a riveting narrative of hope and faith. A capacity audience joined with her in celebrating the achievements of her life-partner architect Phil Freelon and in remembering the life and legacy of Dr. Sonja Haynes Stone.

The Stone Center's celebration culminated with a special reception on November 8 for the 30th anniversary exhibition *With Us Comes the Parallax*, a retrospective of the last 14 years of the Robert and Sallie Brown Gallery and Museum. The exhibition featured 14 different artists from the U.S. and other countries; 6 of the participating artists were in attendance during the reception. Over 100 guests joined with the attending artists to celebrate their work and mark this important milestone for the Gallery.

## COMING IN FALL 2019: 1619 SYMPOSIUM AND EXHIBITION WITH ARTIST FAHAMU PECOU

The Stone Center's Fall programming promises to be both engaging and provocative. As part of the observance of the 400th year since the 1619 arrival of enslaved Africans to the English colonial settlement at Jamestown, Virginia, the Stone Center is organizing a symposium that will explore the deeper meanings of this historically significant event. The symposium will focus on reconnecting missing elements of the narrative of that fateful event and bring forward voices of those who are often overlooked or silenced in conversations about Jamestown and 1619.

In association with the symposium, a special exhibition is planned which will bring award-winning-artist Fahamu Pecou's *Do or Die: Affect, Ritual, Resistance*, organized by the Halsey Institute of Contemporary Art at the College of Charleston, to the Robert and Sallie Brown Gallery and Museum.

The Fall Diaspora Festival of Black and Independent Film will also turn its eyes towards themes associated with the 1619 quadricentennial and present a series that delves into African and American lives pre-European conquest.



## CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

### SEAN DOUGLAS FELLOWSHIP AND UNDERGRADUATE AND GRADUATE INTERNATIONAL FELLOWSHIP

#### Sean Douglas Leadership Fellows Program An Opportunity for Undergraduate Students

The Sean Douglas Leadership Fellows (SDLF) Program provides an opportunity for undergraduate students interested in gaining practical experience in planning and managing arts, cultural and academic programs to serve as an intern at the Stone Center while working closely with the Director.

The intern will participate in various Center activities that may include participation in staff, Board and other key meetings, working on specially designed projects, assisting the Director in drafting project, program and special reports and serving as Stone Center representative at selected gatherings. Interns will receive a stipend for completing the program. The internship covers a 10-week period (September–November or January–April) and is open to all registered UNC at Chapel Hill sophomores, juniors and seniors in good academic standing.

The deadline to apply for the Fall SDLF is March 4, 2019 at 5PM. Applicants for the SDLF will be selected on the basis of a combination of factors including scholarship, record of campus and off-campus participation in service/social justice activities, clarity in describing their objectives for participating in the program, and quality of recommendations submitted in support of their application.

Applicants must submit:

- A brief narrative of no more than 4 pages that addresses the criteria described above;
- An official or unofficial transcript (you may also include a brief resume outlining your extracurricular activities, awards, and other supporting background information);
- Two letters of recommendation (from faculty or staff familiar with you and your work).

Submit your application electronically to [stonecenter@unc.edu](mailto:stonecenter@unc.edu), or you may hand deliver to Christopher Wallace at Room 215, The Stone Center. For information call (919) 962-9001.

#### The Summer-Fall 2019 Undergraduate International Studies Fellowship

The Sonja Haynes Stone Center for Black Culture and History will be accepting applications from UNC undergraduates for its summer and fall 2019 Undergraduate International Studies Fellowship (UISF). The Stone Center, established in 1988 to support the critical examination of all dimensions of African and African-American and Diaspora cultures, created the UISF program in support of the University's effort to globalize the campus and internationalize the curriculum. UISF recipients are awarded up to \$1,500 toward academic research or study in an international setting.

Through the fellowships, the UISF program supports the participation of students of color and other underrepresented students in travel and study abroad programs. Students who plan to study abroad in the summer or fall of 2019 who are in good standing and enrolled full-time are eligible to apply for the fellowship. Preference is given for programs from six-weeks to a year in length and for students who have some familiarity with, or have participated in Stone Center programs and activities.

The application deadline is March 4, 2019 at 5PM. Submit your application electronically to [stonecenter@unc.edu](mailto:stonecenter@unc.edu), or you may hand deliver to Christopher Wallace at Room 215, The Stone Center. For information call (919) 962-9001.



# SPRING 2019

## program calendar

For more information about events, visit us at [unc.edu/depts/stonecenter](http://unc.edu/depts/stonecenter) or email [stonecenter@unc.edu](mailto:stonecenter@unc.edu) or call (919) 962-9001. All events are free and open to the public unless otherwise noted.

January 22 | 5 p.m.

Hitchcock Multipurpose Room  
Stone Center

## HE WAS A POEM, HE WAS A SONG

Join us in a celebration of the life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. with our annual *He Was a Poem, He Was a Song* program. Students, faculty, staff, and community members are invited to explore Dr. King's legacy through music, dance, and spoken word.



January 22 | 7 p.m.

Robert and Sallie Brown Gallery  
and Museum  
Stone Center

## BLACK RIVER OPENING EXHIBITION

Join us Monday, January 22 at 7PM for the opening of Black River. This exhibition includes deeply personal works comprised of paintings, photographs, ready-mades, and videos by Greensboro-based artist Charles Williams. Works in the show bear witness to moments that chronicle his father's personal struggles that challenged him as a son and tested his own spiritual beliefs.



March 1 | 7 p.m.

Stone Center Auditorium

## HOUN' DAWG: LIFE AND TIMES OF BIG MAMA THORNTON

Step back in time with vocal powerhouse, Big Mama Thornton, portrayed by actress Azusa SHESHE Dance. This musical comedy shows her experience as a Blues singer, songwriter, and entertainer dealing with racial and sexual tensions in the music industry. Join us on her fearless journey of musical strife and success. (Warning: Explicit language)

About the artist: Azusa SHESHE Dance resides in New York City, NY and a native of Chattanooga TN. SHESHE is a musical theater actress with accolades including Motormouth Maybelle (HAIRSPRAY), Sophia (THE COLOR PURPLE), Nella (GEE'S BEND), Evilene (THE WIZ), Dionne (HAIR) and has performed on THE APOLLO stage twice. When not on a stage, one can find SHESHE belting old school tunes in the NYC subways with the Music Under New York (MUNY) program or singing with the blues/soul band THE JEALOUS FATES. BIG MAMA THORNTON's life and music has been a true inspiration in SHESHE's career and why she proudly portrays her in hopes of enlightening others to such a talented and powerful female legend. HOUN' DAWG is SHESHE's first original stage work, was submitted and chosen for the UNITED SOLO FESTIVAL 2018 (NYC), sold out and received an encore performance as a best seller.

March 29 | 6:30PM

Stone Center

## AFRICAN DIASPORA LECTURE AND ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION

The Stone Center's 2019 African Diaspora Lecture and Roundtable will rediscover the pioneering role of Black bookstores, an often-overlooked element in the story of Black community development and Black empowerment in the United States. The event features a presentation by Professor Joshua C. Davis whose recent book, *From Head Shops to Whole Foods: The Rise and Fall of Activist Entrepreneurs* (Columbia University Press, 2017) includes a chapter entitled "Liberation Through Literacy: African American Bookstores, Black Power, and the Mainstreaming of Black Books".

Davis' research included extensive review of FBI files and additional interviews with the owners of Black bookstores. His work, featured in the Atlantic ("The FBI's War on Black-Owned Bookstores", February 19, 2018) concluded that there had been an organized campaign to undermine the key and central role of Black bookstores in community life.

Joshua Davis will be joined by several activists and former and current bookstore owners including Geri Augusto, formerly affiliated with Drum and Spear Bookstore in Washington, D.C. and currently Gerard Visiting Associate Professor of International & Public Affairs and Africana Studies, Brown University; Shirikiana Gerima, co-founder of Sankofa Bookstore; Washington, D.C.; Ed Vaughn, founder and former owner, Vaughn's Bookstore, Detroit, Michigan; Clarence Lusane, former employee, Vaughn's Bookstore, Detroit, Michigan and currently Professor and Chair, Political Science Department, Howard University; Paul Coates, Founder-Owner of Black Classic Press; Yvonne Blake, owner, Hakim's Bookstore, Philadelphia; Karen Johnson, Co-owner, Marcus Books, Oakland California; and Michael Simanga, Lecturer, African American Studies, Georgia State University and author of *Congress of African People: History and Memory* (Palgrave Press, 2014).



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## AUTHOR'S DISCUSSION SERIES

### Jezebel Unhinged: Loosing the Black Female Body in Religion and Culture

Tamura Lomax • February 12 • 3:30 p.m. • Bull's Head Bookshop • 207 South Rd, Chapel Hill



In *Jezebel Unhinged* Tamura Lomax traces the use of the "jezebel" trope in the black church and in black popular culture, showing how it is pivotal to reinforcing men's cultural and institutional power to discipline and define black girlhood and womanhood. Drawing on writing by medieval thinkers and travelers, Enlightenment theories of race, the commodification of women's bodies under slavery, and the work of Tyler Perry and Bishop T. D. Jakes, Lomax shows how black women are written into religious and cultural history as sites of sexual deviation. She identifies a contemporary black church culture where figures such as Jakes use the jezebel stereotype to suggest a divine approval of the "lady" while condemning girls and women seen as "hoes." The stereotype preserves gender hierarchy, black patriarchy, and heteronormativity in black communities, cultures, and institutions. In response, black women and girls resist, appropriate, and play with the stereotype's meanings. Healing the black church, Lomax contends, will require ceaseless refusal of the idea that sin resides in black women's bodies, thus disentangling black women and girls from the jezebel narrative's oppressive yoke.

Tamura Lomax is an independent scholar, CEO and founder of *The Feminist Wire*, and coeditor of *Womanist and Black Feminist Responses to Tyler Perry's Productions*.

### Black, Queer, Southern, Women.

Patrick Johnson • February 13 • 6 p.m. • Hitchcock Multipurpose Room • Stone Center



Drawn from the life narratives of more than seventy African American queer women who were born, raised, and continue to reside in the American South, this book powerfully reveals the way these women experience and express racial, sexual, gender, and class identities—all linked by a place where such identities have generally placed them on the margins of society. Using methods of oral history and performance ethnography, E. Patrick Johnson's work vividly enriches the historical record of racialized sexual minorities in the South and brings to light the realities of the region's thriving black lesbian communities.

At once transcendent and grounded in place and time, these narratives raise important questions about queer identity formation, community building, and power relations as they are negotiated within the context of southern history. Johnson uses individual stories to reveal the embedded political and cultural ideologies of the self but also of the listener and society as a whole. These breathtakingly rich life histories show afresh how black female sexuality is and always has been an integral part of the patchwork quilt that is southern culture.

E. Patrick Johnson is the Carlos Montezuma Professor of Performance Studies and African American Studies at Northwestern University and author of *Sweet Tea: Black Gay Men of the South*.

### The Universal Ethiopian Students' Association, 1927–1948: Mobilizing Diaspora

TaKeia N. Anthony • February 26 • 3:30 p.m. • Bull's Head Bookshop • 207 South Rd, Chapel Hill



From 1927–1948, the Universal Ethiopian Students' Association (UESA) mobilized the African diaspora to fight against imperialism and fascist Italy. Formed by a group of educated Africans, African-Americans, and West Indians based in Harlem and shaped by the ideals of Ethiopianism, communism, Pan-Africanism, Black Nationalism, Garveyism, and the New Negro Movement, the UESA sought to educate the diaspora about its glorious African past and advocate for anti-imperialism and independence. This book focuses on the UESA's literary organ, *The African*, mapping a constellation of understudied activists and their contributions to the fight for Black liberation in the twentieth century. Anthony's publication offers the first study of the ideology, influences, and contributions of the UESA and *The African*.

TaKeia N. Anthony is Assistant Professor of History at North Carolina Central University, USA.

### African Kings and Black Slaves: Sovereignty and Dispossession in the Early Modern Atlantic

Herman L. Bennett • April 4 • 3:30 p.m. • Bull's Head Bookshop • 207 South Rd, Chapel Hill



As early as 1441, and well before other European countries encountered Africa, small Portuguese and Spanish trading vessels were plying the coast of West Africa, where they conducted business with African kingdoms that possessed significant territory and power. In the process, Iberians developed an understanding of Africa's political landscape in which they recognized specific sovereigns, plotted the extent and nature of their polities, and grouped subjects according to their ruler.

In *African Kings and Black Slaves*, Herman L. Bennett mines the historical archives of Europe and Africa to reinterpret the first century of sustained African-European interaction. These encounters were not simple economic transactions. Rather, according to Bennett, they involved clashing understandings of diplomacy, sovereignty, and politics. Bennett unearths the ways in which Africa's kings required Iberian traders to participate in elaborate diplomatic rituals, establish treaties, and negotiate trade practices with autonomous territories. And he shows how Iberians based their interpretations of African sovereignty on medieval European political precepts grounded in Roman civil and canon law. In the eyes of Iberians, the extent to which Africa's polities conformed to these norms played a significant role in determining who was, and who was not, a sovereign people—a judgment that shaped who could legitimately be enslaved.

Through an examination of early modern African-European encounters, *African Kings and Black Slaves* offers a reappraisal of the dominant depiction of these exchanges as being solely mediated through the slave trade and racial difference. By asking in what manner did Europeans and Africans configure sovereignty, polities, and subject status, Bennett offers a new depiction of the diasporic identities that had implications for slaves' experiences in the Americas.

Herman L. Bennett is Professor of History at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. He is author of *Colonial Blackness: A History of Afro-Mexico and Africans in Colonial Mexico: Absolutism, Christianity and Afro-Creole Consciousness, 1570–1640*.