

# MILESTONES

THE SONJA HAYNES STONE CENTER FOR BLACK CULTURES AND HISTORIES

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stonecenter.unc.edu

## NOTED SCHOLAR AND DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKER LERHONDA MANIGAULT-BRYANT JOINS THE STONE CENTER AS THE FOURTH DIRECTOR IN ITS 35 YEAR HISTORY



LeRhonda Manigault-Bryant joins the Stone Center in January 2023 as its new Director, and as a full Professor in the African, African American and Diaspora Studies Department. She joins the Stone Center, which now includes the Institute for African American Research, as the 4th Director in its 35-year history. She comes to the Stone Center and UNC after a 14-year career at Williams College in Massachusetts where she was Professor of Africana Studies and also served as Associate Dean of Faculty from 2014–2020. She is the author of *Talking to the Dead: Religion, Music, and Lived Memory Among Gullah/Geechee Women* (Duke U. Press, 2014), *Fat Religion: Protestant Christianity and the Construction of the Fat Body* (Abingdon U.K./Routledge, co-edited with Susan E. Hill and Lynne Gerber) and *Womanist and Black Feminist Responses to Tyler Perry's Productions* (Palgrave and Macmillan/NY and London, co-edited with Tamura A. Lomax and Carol B. Duncan). She is currently working on several book length writing projects including *Black Crossroads: Mourning Rituals and Geographies of Sacred Space*.

She is the founder and principal of **ConjureGirlBlue** Productions that specializes in non-fiction storytelling. She has produced/directed award winning documentaries including *death, everything, nothing* (2020), a short that garnered awards at the Spotlight Documentary Film Festival and the DOC LA Los Angeles Documentary Film Festival.

The following is an excerpt from a December 2022 conversation with Professor Manigault-Bryant with the Stone Center's Fall 2022 Sean Douglas Fellow Salena Braye, and outgoing Director Joseph Jordan. Professor Manigault's commentary is indicated as **LMB**, Salena Braye's Commentary is designated by the Initials **SB**, and those of Joseph Jordan as **JFJ**.

**JFJ:** The Stone Center offers what I would call an appealing palette as opposed to a blank slate meaning that there are many opportunities for someone who has ideas about something that needs to be done but has not yet been accomplished. I think the Stone Center has the capability of doing so many things whether it's with students or with local, regional, national or international audiences. And that includes considerations of whether it's field oriented, broadly imagined, or looking towards the expansion of the field of African American and diaspora studies, or any of the other kinds of things that might take us to the next level. So, I'm looking forward to whatever happens under your leadership.

**LMB:** Yes, no pressure, right? For me, that has always been the appeal even from the onset. For this role, I didn't feel I was being asked to simply slot in. I know you were in the role for more than 20 years, so I didn't feel the priority was to simply find someone who can fit in this role in a very prescribed way. There are lots of things that the Stone Center has done historically that will remain like the Fellowships and other things that are going to absolutely be retained as they are. Those are our strengths. And there are also other areas that we might think more broadly about, and I know we will figure that out over time.

I am not coming in with the idea that we're going to do particular things right away other than really finding and connecting with the folks who've always been connected to the Center and getting a sense of why they continue to be connected and to also know what their priorities are. Doing that kind of listening tour is very important. It has always been very appealing to me because I've never felt like I was just being slotted in. It's like I was asked: "what are your gifts and abilities and talents," and how can I maximize them here. And here is the opportunity to do so. And that's very exciting and I'm very high about that possibility

**SB:** To students, professors on the campus can seem like they're being pushed into being siloed into one aspect of their interest of study. I think one of the most exciting things is seeing someone who's so ready and eager to use all their skills that they're bringing. What do you think is something you're most excited about or something you're eager to engage with in terms of connections?

**LMB:** That is a great question, and it's a tough question because with someone like me who has all of these interests that challenge is going to add to that. I am excited about fundraising which may be really odd to some people. I am also thinking about some of the STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and math) oriented programming, thinking about where Black folks intersect with science and technology and engineering and those kinds of categories. I am thinking of ways how we might boost the visibility of the Center around STEAM and then prioritize the need to make sure that students are entering the space, that they feel a part of the same space that the faculty are entering. Also, thinking about alumni folks who've had an history with the Stone Center. I think of a kind of family reunion or the concentric family reunions that are happening that bring folks into the center. I also talked to students, and I asked them "What's your involvement with the Stone Center? How much do you know about it?" and they would say: "I've been to a program here and there and I might spend a little time there. I have such and such class..." They all also said: "I want to spend more time there, but I don't always know what's going on or I don't always check". So, it's kind of thinking about those concentric kinds of family reunions, how might we bring different kinds of people into the space and kind of boost the visibility so that students and faculty and staff in the community do know what's going on. I think it's really important to say that the Stone Center is a coveted space. It was a very hard fought and very well earned and deserving space. In light of that, my MO is absolutely leaning into the idea it's a sacred space in a lot of ways – wanting to hold and protect the sanctity of this space, given that people fought so hard to ensure that we have it as visible as any other place on campus.

**JFJ:** Some years ago, I traveled with one of the specialists from Wilson Library to the Penn Center to work with them to bring the Penn Center papers to UNC at Chapel Hill. So, when I saw that you were selected as the top candidate by the search committee, I was also pleased to see that your family was one of those who had a history that reached back to the Gullah/Geechee history in that area.

**LMB:** Yes! I smiled when you mentioned this to me because coming to the Stone Center is very, very exciting for me personally and professionally and for my family, but it also feels quite serendipitous – the timing of it seems quite serendipitous because all of these things just seemed to happen. You feel a sort of affirmation for something that is already happening. The story for me begins the summer between my graduation from Duke and starting my first year in seminary. I worked at the Penn Center during that summer, and I don't quite remember what the title of my role was, but it was something like a teaching assistant. I was helping out with all of their ►►

summer programming, so I lived on Saint Helena's Island with a family. So fast forward two years later doing my graduate work and making the decision that my first doctoral work was going to be on my own people in South Carolina in the low country. And so, the first place that I go to is Penn Center. So, the connection between the Penn Center, St. Helena Island in my own life took on a greater importance when my first book *Talking to the Dead* came out and we were looking for covers for the publication. When they asked me what I would like to do for a cover I went to the Penn Center archives at UNC and I picked three images. We actually didn't end up using them, but there were other serendipitous things that were happening with the cover. But the point is that the Penn Center has long been not just in my imaginary, it's also a part of my own life and development. So, I'm happy that another serendipitous event brings me back to the place where so many things have just aligned, which is great.

**SB:** Are there other moments of serendipity that you've experienced since coming back or coming to UNC, whether in your activist experience or your academic experiences or any other areas that make you pause?

**LMB:** Thinking that this is where I should be. This was a position that someone said, 'Hey Rhon, I think you would really be great for this position.' You know, I was at a stage in my professional career where I wasn't looking for anything special, just kind of doing my work and doing my filmmaking and not looking for anything in particular. So, I said, 'OK. I'll take a look' and I said, 'Oh wow ... it's like all of the hats that I've worn!' You know from putting on exhibitions celebrating 50 years of black studies at Williams to being a filmmaker on my own, to just doing the traditional kind of scholarly work and writing and research. And, as you know, in my former life as a musician I used to sing. And I said to myself, 'Here's a position that will allow me to utilize my administrative experience having been Associate Dean of Faculty at Williams, to all of the kind of building

work that we would do in Africana Studies at Williams. And I said, 'Here I would be able to wear all of the hats.' With this job I'm not having to recreate and double here and double there. Here, all of the things that I like to do came together and I said, 'This is a really interesting and really appealing timing of an opportunity.'

**SB:** Can you say more about your family papers?

**LMB:** I just did a search in the UNC browser, just to see whether my family has been here in any way. So, I put my family name 'Manigault' right in the browser and what comes up was the Manigault family papers. So, I find that UNC holds the papers of the slaveholders who held my family. I think it was the day before I talked to the search committee that I figured that out. And I was simply struck, I mean if you talk about serendipity that was the moment that I began to think about this opportunity as a homecoming for me. It was really interesting and compelling for a lot of reasons, and then I started thinking in a different way. This is a potential homecoming in a way I didn't even expect, and I still haven't gone to look at the papers. I haven't seen them in their entirety, but I look there and I see the names of folks that I know. Many are my slaveholding forbearers and I know this not only because of where they were in terms of Berkeley County, but all of my great aunts and uncles, all of their names they got from these slave ancestors. Lewis and Willie and Charles. But here is also another serendipitous moment that got me to think. Movement for me has never been just about some kind of professional aspiration. It's always felt important to feel rooted and connected in a way that isn't just about what the job is because the job will get frustrating. And if you don't have something to really tether and anchor yourself you can get frustrated. Knowing that those papers are at UNC and that's my family made me say to myself, 'OK I'm coming! Here we go!' ■

Persons interested in speaking with or meeting Professor Manigault-Bryant should contact the Stone Center at [stonecenter@unc.edu](mailto:stonecenter@unc.edu), or call 919-962-9001



Dear Community Members,

I am Dr. LeRhonda "Rhon" Manigault-Bryant, and I am thrilled to join the UNC Chapel Hill community as the Director of the Sonja Haynes Stone Center for Black Culture and History and Professor of African, African American, and Diaspora Studies. I will arrive after having served as Professor and Chair of Africana Studies at Williams College in Williamstown, Massachusetts. To the role of Director, I bring an array of experiences to bear, including a background in Africana Studies and religious studies, a life as an active scholar and filmmaker, and dynamic administrative expertise.

At UNC I will continue doing the life-giving work of bringing people together, and empowering them intellectually, creatively, and ethically in ways that demonstrate a valuing of Black life, Black thought, and Black space. I am genuinely excited by the possibilities of embracing and lifting up the Stone Center's current mission, of thoughtfully embracing its recent restructuring, and of carefully expanding its vision with deep listening and substantive attention to the needs of you all, its community.

I anticipate bolstering the Stone Center's already stellar reputation for intellectual rigor and academic excellence; of ensuring the fullest implementation of its mission, and of championing all the elements that make Stone Center a vibrant cultural center, learning space, and hub for Black life within and beyond UNC. It is my goal to generate opportunities to ensure that the Stone Center operates with a sensibility of sustainability.

As a Duke alumna (please don't hold that against me!) and a native of Moncks Corner, South Carolina—the land of Gullah-Geechee—I am delighted to bring my family and to return to the region as the Stone Center's new director. This homecoming feels right on time, and I anticipate meeting as many of you as possible, as soon as possible.

I am excited about all of the great things we will build together.

Yours,

Dr. RMB



## STONE CENTER JOINS WITH BLACK ARCHIVE MEDIA TO SPONSOR A UNIQUE INTERNSHIP FOR SUMMER 2023



During the Summer of 2023 the Stone Center will support a unique internship opportunity offered by Black Archive Media (BAM). Founded by UNC alum and artist, organizer and filmmaker Resita Cox, BAM is a creative film house working to archive the Black experience through documentary media. To date, the focus of this project has been Princeville, NC, the first town incorporated by freed, formerly enslaved African descendants in the U.S. According to Cox, Princeville faces an endangered future as environmental challenges threaten to wash away this important historical landmark.

Cox's documentary project *Freedom Hill*, (2022) is an immersive tour that chronicles the ongoing and living legacy of this community. Guided by Princeville native Marquetta Dickens, the camera captures what makes the town so special: a car caravan to celebrate a 106th birthday, aunties who love to tell stories, classic North Carolina barbecue. Yet these moments in Princeville are haunted by the specter of the floods that regularly brutalize the town, forcing people to rebuild their homes time and time again. Cox's work exposes a history of environmental racism and why ultimately, "Black towns always exist within this larger white governance regime." By sharing the spiritual, ancestral, and political landscapes of Princeville, *Freedom Hill* pushes against America's historical and present legacies of racialized displacement.

During the Summer 2023 BAM will host its second *Freedom Hill Youth Media Camp*, a 4-week documentary production program connecting local NC students to Princeville's Black history. Students will conduct interviews, learn oral history skills, explore archives and learn the basics of documentary filmmaking. The program will culminate in a short documentary created by participants. The Summer 2022 documentary may be viewed at: [vimeo.com/747458271](https://vimeo.com/747458271)

BAM is seeking an Impact Intern to assist with the ongoing impact campaign for *Freedom Hill*. The impact campaign has three main focuses: youth programming, community/family engagement, and educational curriculum and screenings. The BAM intern will learn about documentary filmmaking

and fundraising, film impact campaigns, youth programming and the rich Black history of Eastern North Carolina.

The Impact Intern will work with partner/community organizations, including local schools and universities, to plan and host a series of screenings. In support of the Summer Camp, the Intern will engage in outreach to local schools about camp and distribute application materials to potential applicants. The intern will also respond to inquiries from potential students/schools. Additional duties include logistical planning and support, assisting in organizing the curriculum, outreach to potential camp sponsors, funders and donors of equipment, expertise, or food. Interns will help to identify and secure guest lecturers.

An important element of the Summer project is *Freedom Hill's Family Reunion Backyard Tour*. The Project will sponsor 10 families who will screen and discuss *Freedom Hill* over a meal. Each family will receive \$100–300 for groceries. Topics of discussion will range from environmental racism to the importance of archiving family memories. The Impact Intern will participate in outreach to local families about hosting screenings and will, occasionally, host screenings and discussions on behalf of the Project.

The internship will take place over an eight-week period during the Summer of 2023 and will provide a stipend of \$3200. The internship is conducted in both remote and in person in Princeville, NC. UNC at Chapel Hill students who are interested in applying for this internship should write a letter of interest and mention the Stone Center/BAM program to:

Resita H. Cox, Director and Producer  
Black Archive Media  
[workwithresita@resitacox.com](mailto:workwithresita@resitacox.com)

The Staff at Black Archive Media will provide you with additional application materials once your interest letter is received. ■

## STONE CENTER WELCOMES TWO SEAN DOUGLAS LEADERSHIP FELLOWS FOR SPRING 2023

### GRANT ALEXANDER



Grant Alexander is a sophomore in Global Studies with a focus on International Politics, The Nation State, and Social Movements. His geographical focus is Africa and the Black Diaspora and Latin America. He is also a double major in Public Policy. He is a storyteller, activist, and academic who is motivated to abolish the capitalist, colonialist, and carceral paradigm and state. His interests include international and community development, the critical geographies of urban and rural spaces, environmental justice, liberating creativity, and epistemologies of the Black diaspora. As a fellow his objective is to soak up wisdom and foster relationships with the professionals working at the center. He is also looking forward to the opportunity to curate artistic projects, plan cultural events, organize community work, and conduct research in order to uplift and make safe spaces for Blackness on Carolina's campus.

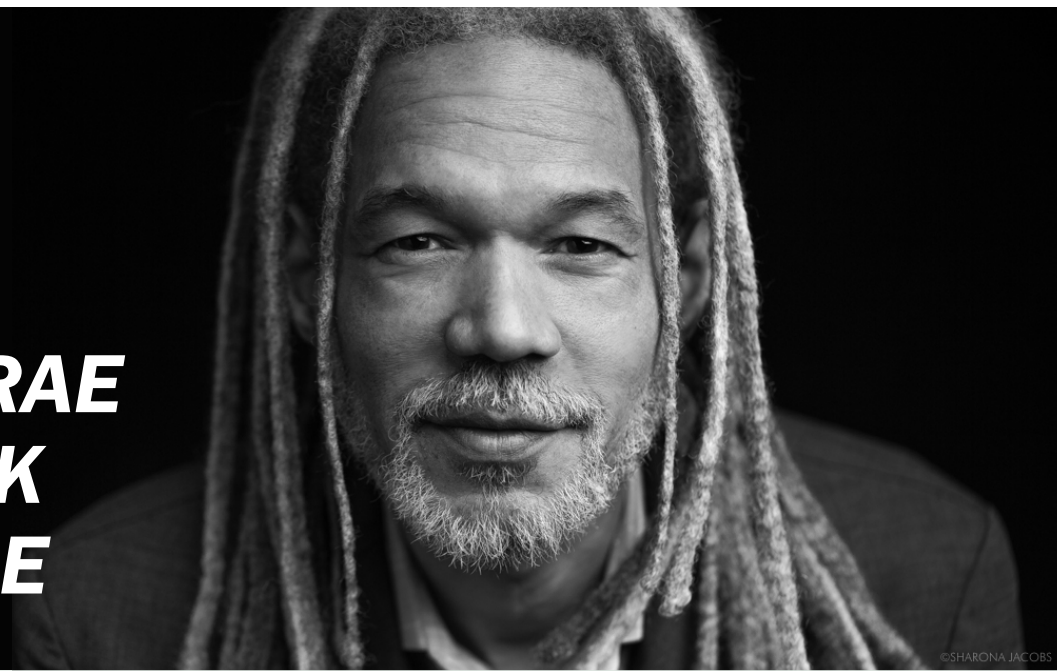
### KRYSTAL LACAYO



Krystal Lacayo is a sophomore studying Environmental Studies with a concentration on Sustainability and a double minor in PPE (Philosophy, Politics, and Economics) and Urban Planning. Krystal has interests in sustaining and advancing marginalized communities in their physical environment as well as their social environment. Krystal has held previous roles in community development as the founder of a local nonprofit based in Charlotte, NC that aimed to connect and elevate the knowledge of her Black peers in her community. She is the founder of an unaffiliated club that seeks to showcase the experiences of Black students in academia, athletics, and in everyday social life. Krystal recently returned from a study abroad program at the University of Cape Town in Cape Town, South Africa. While there she studied colonial influences on the social structures of South African communities and interned at the Development Action Group (DAG). At DAG she assisted with research and communication projects geared toward opening more affordable housing options for citizens residing in informal settlements. As a Sean Douglas Leadership Fellow, she will continue her efforts to engage community members in conversations and creative projects that contribute to the progress of the Black community. Krystal is originally from Northern Virginia and has lived in Charlotte, NC for the past few years before attending UNC-Chapel Hill. In her free time, she enjoys nature walks, hiking, painting, trying out new restaurants, or getting fit at the gym. ■



# UNC PREPARES FOR THE UNIVERSITY-WIDE CELEBRATION OF THE INAUGURAL DR. GENNA RAE MCNEIL ENDOWED BLACK HISTORY MONTH LECTURE



WITH THE SUPPORT OF GENEROUS DONATIONS FROM THE UNC COMMUNITY, THE ANNUAL UNIVERSITY-WIDE BLACK HISTORY MONTH LECTURE IS NOW ENDOWED AND WILL WELCOME ITS FIRST GUEST LECTURER DURING BLACK HISTORY MONTH IN FEBRUARY 2023.

The inaugural lecture will take place on 22 February at 6:30 pm in the Stone Center Auditorium with guest speaker Dr. Vincent Brown, a noted scholar, historian and film maker whose unique explorations into the nature of historical slavery have garnered him many awards.

Professor Brown is currently the Charles Warren Professor of American History, Professor of African American Studies and Interim Director of the Charles Warren Center for Studies in American History at Harvard University. He will join us to present the first Dr. Genna Rae McNeil Black History Month Lecture. He is also founding director of Harvard's History Design Studio and teaches courses in Atlantic history, African diaspora studies, and the history of slavery in the Americas.

Brown is a prolific scholar and filmmaker and is the author of *The Reaper's Garden: Death and Power in the World of Atlantic Slavery* (Harvard University Press, 2008), producer of *Herskovits at the Heart of Blackness*, an audiovisual documentary broadcast on the PBS series Independent Lens, and is most recently the author of *Tacky's Revolt: The Story of an Atlantic Slave War* (Belknap Press, 2020).

Awards for *Tacky's Revolt* include: the 2021 James A. Rawley Prize from the Organization of American Historians; the 2021 P. Sterling Stuckey Book Prize from the Association for the Study of the Worldwide African Diaspora; the 2021 Elsa Goveia Prize from the Association of Caribbean Historians; the 2021 Oscar Kenshur Book Prize from the Indiana Center for Eighteenth

Century Studies; the 2021 Harriet Tubman Prize from the Lapidus Center for the Historical Analysis of Transatlantic Slavery, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture; the 2020 Sons & Daughters of United States Middle Passage Phillis Wheatley Book Award for Non-Fiction Research; and Co-winner of the 2021 Frederick Douglass Book Prize from the Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance, and Abolition and the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History. It was named as one of the Best Books of 2020 by The Guardian and The Observer and also selected as one of the Best Black History Books of 2020 by the editors of the African American Intellectual History Society.

Brown co-founded Timestamp Media in 2020. He is the Executive Producer of the seven part WNET/Timestamp Media series *The Bigger Picture*, (2020–2022) and has served as an advisor and commentator on numerous projects. His work, including producing and directing, covers more than 20 major media projects over the past 15 years. His most recent work includes *Harvard and the Legacy of Slavery* (Executive Producer).

Brown is a Ph.d. graduate in history from Duke University, and also earned a BA in history from the University of California, San Diego.

Dr. Brown's Lecture is free and open to the public. Several of his books will be available for purchase at the onsite.

For information contact:

Sheriff Abba Drammeh, 919-962-9001, [sheriff7@email.unc.edu](mailto:sheriff7@email.unc.edu) ■

## STONE CENTER'S SPRING 2023 SPOTLIGHT DONOR



UNC alum Monica Parham is the Stone Center's Spring 2023 Spotlight donor, in honor and recognition of her \$100,000 donation. Parham had been a practicing attorney and committed champion to several local, regional, and national causes when she succumbed to cancer in October 2020. The Stone Center was one of three UNC units that were named as beneficiaries of a trust established to fulfill her wish to continue supporting causes that were important to her.

Monica Parham was a Morehead-Cain Scholar and Phi Beta Kappa while at UNC where she earned a B.A. in Political Science. She went on to earn a law degree from Yale Law school where she was the Finals Chairman of the Yale Moot Court Board and Senior Editor of the Yale Law and Policy Review. She then went on to become a member of the North Carolina and District of Columbia Bars. She became a tireless champion for diversity and for women in law and served as president of the Association of Law Firm Diversity Professionals and was a member of the American Bar Association Commission on Women in the Professions, Women of Color Research Initiative Advisory Board. She also spent 12 years as a commercial litigator and was former member and president of the Association of Law Firm Diversity Professionals.

From 2011–2012 she was the president of the Women's Bar Association of the District of Columbia (WBADC) and from 2016–2018 she was president of the WBADC Foundation that provided grants to organizations in the DC metropolitan area focusing on the unmet legal and related needs of women and girls. Recently the WBADC created, in her honor, the Monica Parham Diversity Equity and Inclusion Award that is given each year to two individuals based upon their meaningful and effective work to increase diversity equity and inclusion in the legal profession.

Her community-based work included service as Scholarship Chairman of the Pearl and Ivy Educational Foundation that focused on high school graduating seniors at DC public and public charter schools as well as alumni of the high school scholars' program during their freshman through junior years of college.

The Stone Center joins the family and friends of Monica Parham in celebrating her life and the outstanding accomplishments she was able to achieve while serving her community and profession. Her gift to the Stone Center will allow us to raise up the values she modeled for all. ■



## STONE CENTER ISSUES ARTISTS CALL FOR PROPOSALS FOR BROWN GALLERY FALL 2023–SPRING 2024 EXHIBITION SEASON



The Robert and Sallie Brown Gallery and Museum at the Sonja Haynes Stone Center for Black Culture and History is accepting proposals for exhibitions for the period September 2023–December 2023; and January 2024–May 2024.

Proposals will be accepted from established and emerging artists, or groups presenting new and challenging works that reflect the mission of the Stone Center and the Brown Gallery and Museum. We are interested in work in a variety of media and techniques that may not fall within traditional boundaries.

The deadline for submissions is February 28, 2023. Final selections will be announced at the end of March 2023.

Your proposal should provide background on your concept for the exhibition, a statement on how it fits into the mission of the Brown Gallery and Museum, and all artists that will be included in the show. Submissions should include the following support materials:

- A brief artist's statement, and/or short narrative about your work;
- A current CV or resume, listing all previous exhibitions if applicable;
- A digital file with 10 to 15 digital images in jpeg format, or if sending by mail or hand delivering, documentation in a digital file or one of the following: a slide sheet of 15–20 35mm slides. All slides or digital images must be numbered and identified accompanied by a list indicating title, date, medium, and dimensions (height x width x depth).
- Do not send original works of art.

Visit the Stone Center's website for more information on the Gallery and its mission at [stonecenter.unc.edu](http://stonecenter.unc.edu). Gallery and Exhibition Guidelines can be found on the dropdown menu under BUILDING.

Please send all submissions to: [stonecenter@unc.edu](mailto:stonecenter@unc.edu) with the heading/Subject Line: Brown Gallery Proposal. If sending by mail or delivering by hand, address to:

**Brown Gallery Art Committee**  
**The Stone Center for Black Culture and History 150 South Rd., CB#5250**  
**UNC-Chapel Hill**  
**Chapel Hill, NC 27599-5250**

If you have any questions please call 919-962-9001 ■

## THE SUMMER 2023–FALL 2023 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 2023 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 its curriculum. In recent years the UISF has focused on expanding opportunities for students that are underrepresented in international travel and study programs at UNC.

UISF recipients are awarded up to \$2,000 as either as a primary or secondary source of support towards academic research or study in an international setting. Through the fellowships, the UISF program supports the participation of underrepresented students in travel and study abroad programs. Students who plan to study abroad in the summer or fall of 2023, who are in good standing and enrolled full-time, are eligible to apply for the fellowship.

Preference is given for programs that are six-weeks or more in length and for students who have some familiarity with the Stone Center and its mission, and who have a clear understanding of how international study and travel will contribute to their overall educational goals and objectives.



*To apply, submit an application essay:*

Please attach an essay, no more than five (5) typed, double-spaced pages about the study-abroad program for which you seek support. Independent, non-University sponsored programs, will be considered on a case by case basis. Describe your academic and non-academic achievements and honors and provide a description of any significant extracurricular activities. Include in your essay why you are interested in international travel and/or study, and how it will contribute to the achievement of your academic and goals.

Your essay should also identify any other experiential and personal goals you may have, and discuss how the international experience will contribute to achieving them. Indicate your proposed itinerary, travel schedules, and other particulars about your planned experience. Lastly, explain how the funds will help you overcome any financial difficulties.

*Note: Your application Essay is a key element in the committee's decision. Applicants are encouraged to produce a carefully crafted document.*

The application deadline for the summer or fall of 2023 is March 10, 2023 at 5 p.m. Submit your application electronically to [stonecenter@unc.edu](mailto:stonecenter@unc.edu), or you may hand deliver to the Stone Center, Room 215, The Stone Center. For information call 919-962-9001. ■



# IF WE MUST DIE... WE WILL FIGHT TO THE DEATH!: RESISTANCE AND REVOLT ABOARD THE SLAVE SHIP

## 2023 STONE CENTER GALLERY EXHIBIT

During the spring term 2023 the Stone Center will explore the phenomenon of physical resistance by African captives caught up in the grip of European slavery. Using information, images, and testimony from various sources, along with the work of historians and other scholars, we provide information that will help audiences better understand how captive Africans fought, from the very moment of subjugation, for their freedom.

Unlike other work on resistance that focuses on actions by enslaved individuals that took place in various parts of the Americas, this exhibition, instead, focuses on what we call the “first acts of self-emancipation”, by those who fought back aboard slave ships by any means necessary. This approach allows us to examine both the individual and collective practices of enslaved individuals who had been captured by slavers or who were sold by those in power among and within African nations.

This exhibition includes information on the nationality of European slave ships, the numbers of voyages, the dangers and travails of the passage, and destination of slave ships. We also highlight the roles of the various European nations as they pursued the riches that the commerce promised despite the devastating effects it had on the African communities and nations that fell victim to the greed and exploitation that typified colonial enterprises. *If We Must Die...*

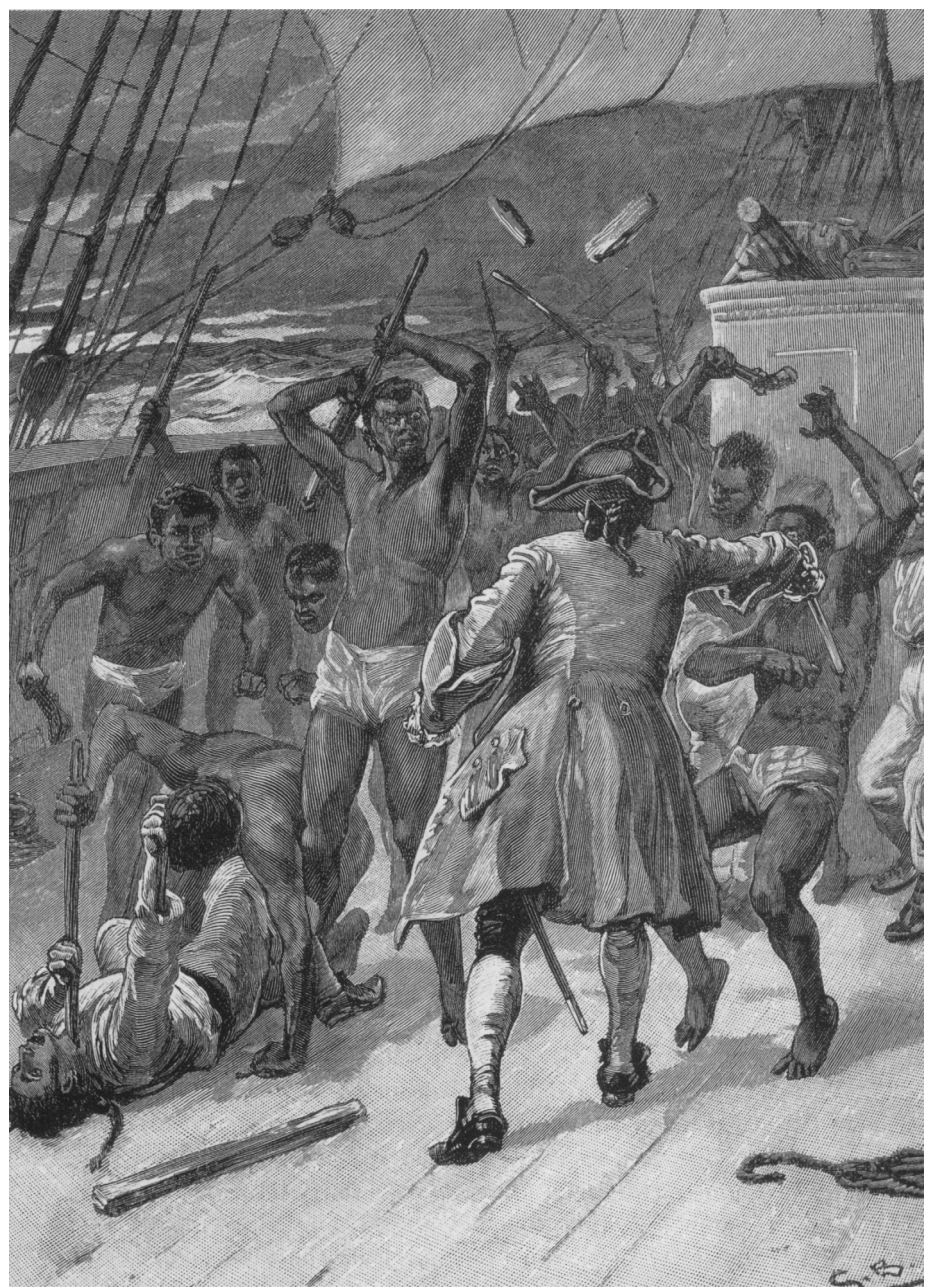
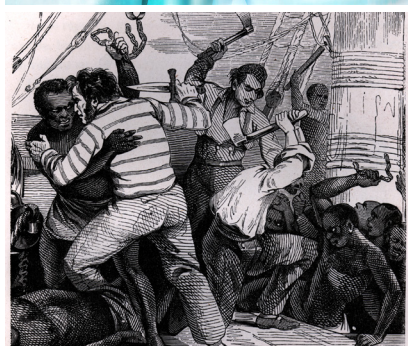
*We Will, then, Fight to the Death*, benefits greatly from the scholarship of those who've taken the time to pore over commercial documents, insurance records, oral testimonies, and legal briefs among other materials that, taken together, provide a more complete picture of the individual and collective resistance of enslaved captives. In particular we highlight Eric Robert Taylor's *If We Must Die: Shipboard Insurrections in the Era of the Atlantic Slave Trade* (LSU Press, 2009).

Taylor's compelling arguments in '*If We Must Die...*' provided much of the conceptual foundation for mounting this exhibition. His work, like that of many other scholars delving into this topic, compelled us to examine more closely the notion that the slave ship was the death of all perceived hope by those who had been taken aboard.

This exhibition highlights scholarship, testimony and oral records, as well as other sources that acknowledge the resistance of captives and argues that many were never fully resigned to their apparent fate as previously suggested.

Other parts of the exhibition focus on the dynamics of the slave ship including its construction, on the inhuman conditions under which enslaved individuals were transported, and a specific focus on some of the more noteworthy rebellions, or insurrections that appear in the literature.

*If We Must Die... We Will Fight to the Death!: Resistance and Revolt Aboard the Slave Ship* also features an installation by internationally renowned sculptor and artist Tony Scott, as well as other contributions of her work that centers the humanity of enslaved individuals. ■



## GALLERY SPEAKER SERIES



The exhibition opening on Thursday, February 2 occurs simultaneously with a companion speaker series that features leading scholars whose work address some aspect of the special world and Culture of the enterprise of slavery and the slave ship. The first speaker in the series is historian and scholar activist **Marcus Rediker** who will describe the unique social dynamics that came to define European slavery as recounted in his *The Slave Ship: A Human History* (Penguin Books, 2008). Rediker's other works include an important recasting of the story of the Amistad in *The Amistad Rebellion: An Atlantic Odyssey of Slavery and Freedom* (Penguin Books, 2013).



On March 8, International Women's Day, we will also spotlight another notable scholar when we host University of Washington Professor **Sowande Mustakeem**, whose *Slavery at Sea: Terror, Sex and Sickness in the Middle Passage* (University of Illinois Press, 2016) describes how the transport of human cargoes comprised a violently regulated process that served as the foundation for the institution of slavery. Importantly, she offers a critique of conventional studies of the slave ship and recounts how this process, and the narrative, are often gendered to focus on male captives. She says these narratives should be re-examined to also consider the comparable and differential effects the slave enterprise imposes on women, children, teens, infants, nursing mothers, the elderly, diseased, ailing, and dying.



The final presentation in the companion speaker series occurs on March 30 and will be delivered by **Lisa Lindsay**, Professor and chair of UNC's History department. For this series she will speak on her work in progress on women as victims of the trade. Her *Captives as Commodities: The Transatlantic Slave Trade* (Pearson, 2007) is a highly regarded text that focuses on the unique character of the commerce in human beings as commodities, which fundamentally changed how 'humanity' was understood and misunderstood, around the world. ■