

MILESTONES

THE SONJA HAYNES STONE CENTER FOR RESEARCH IN BLACK CULTURE AND HISTORY



REVERENCE: HAIR MEMORY THROUGH IMAGES EXHIBITION

BY JAMAICA GILMER, RECIPIENT
OF THE 2026 PAMELA NICOLE
CUMMINGS VISITING ARTIST
FELLOWSHIP

September 24, 2026 – May 31, 2027
Robert and Sallie Brown Gallery
and Museum

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FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK



Dear Stone Center Family,

As a new academic year begins, I find myself reflecting on the remarkable power of institutions that not only preserve history but help shape the future. For more than three decades, the Stone Center has served as a gathering place for scholarship, creativity, dialogue, and community—a space where Black life and culture are not merely studied, but celebrated and sustained.

This year, we are embarking on an ambitious journey to raise funds to solidify our sustainability. This effort reflects our belief that the future of Black studies, public scholarship, and cultural engagement requires bold imagination and meaningful investment. Together, we are expanding opportunities for students, strengthening research and public programming, and ensuring that the Stone Center remains a vibrant home for generations to come.

In a moment when so many institutions are being asked to do more with less, your support and partnership matter more than ever. Thank you for believing in our mission and for helping us build a future worthy of the communities we serve.

With gratitude and determination,

Dr. Fhm

MASTERCLASS / STORY TELLING AND SHORT FILM WORKSHOP WITH EMMY-AWARD WINNING FILM DIRECTOR, RESITA COX

October 8 | 3 PM | Hitchcock Room



Carolina alumna **Resita Heavenly Cox** is an Emmy-Award winning film director, community organizer, educator, and cultural philosopher whose practice centers on the concepts of Sun Ra's myth science. This theoretical framework posits American Blackness as a myth, particularly within the confines of capitalism. Resita uses moving images to reinterpret the complexities of Black life through a "third cinema" and impact-focused documentary lens. Her filmmaking is a deeply personal, somatic practice that moves beyond conventional methods to prioritize community, care, and collective well-being.

By holding a mirror up to audiences, her films craft a yet-to-be-conceived image of self. Resita's work forces viewers to grapple with uncomfortable realities of the human condition, ultimately serving the goal of imaging and birthing a better way of being. She operates from the conviction that each individual spark is the foundation for revolutionary cultural change. Resita is a Hulu/Kartemquin Accelerator Fellow, North Star Fellow, 2024 Rockwood Documentary Leaders Fellow (Ford Foundation), a 2025 Chicken & Egg Eggcelerator Fellow, and 2024/2025 Grounded Possibilities Environmental Justice Fellow. She holds an MFA from Northwestern University and was named an Esteemed Artist by the City of Chicago in 2022.

AWARD-WINNING AUTHOR, ALEXIS PAULINE GUMBS TO DELIVER THE 2026 STONE MEMORIAL LECTURE

November 17
6:30 PM
Stone Center
Auditorium

Dr. Alexis Pauline Gumbs is a Queer Black Feminist Love Evangelist and an aspirational favorite cousin to all life. Her work in this lifetime is to facilitate infinite, unstoppable ancestral love in practice. Alexis' books are portable textual ceremonies. Her most recent book *Survival is a Promise: The Eternal Life of Audre Lorde* revolutionizes the scale of life writing. Her award-winning meditation *Undrowned: Black Feminist Lessons from Marine Mammals* offers the critical interspecies love song we need at this urgent stage of our collective evolution. Alexis is also currently working her next book in honor of June Jordan and Fannie Lou Hamer, *A Homemade Field of Love* (forthcoming from Yale University Press).

Alexis is currently a Monument Lab Fellow and a Loss and Damage Collaborative Commissioned Author creating ceremony in honor of the wisdom of climate catastrophe survivors in the legacy of Audre Lorde.

Alexis received a 2023 Windham-Campbell Prize Winner in Poetry, 2022 Whiting Award in Nonfiction and a 2022 National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship in Prose. Alexis was also a 2020-2021



National Humanities Center Fellow.

She has transformed the scope of intellectual, creative and oracular writing with her triptych of experimental works published by Duke University Press (*Spill: Scenes of Black Feminist Fugitivity* in 2016, *M Archive: After the End of the World* in 2018 and *Dub: Finding Ceremony* in 2020.) Unlike most academic texts, Alexis's work has inspired artists across form to create dance works, installation work, paintings, processions, divination practices, operas, quilts and more.

2026-2027 EXHIBITION: **REVERENCE: HAIR MEMORY THROUGH IMAGES BY JAMAICA GILMER, RECIPIENT OF THE 2026 PAMELA NICOLE CUMMINGS VISITING ARTIST FELLOWSHIP**

Exhibition Opening and Artist Talk | September 24 | 6:30 PM |
Robert and Sallie Brown Gallery and Museum

Exhibition On View | September 24, 2026 – May 31, 2027 |
Robert and Sallie Brown Gallery and Museum

▼ cont from front page

Jamaica Gilmer is a relentless hope-architect, multifaceted artist, and curator working across photography, ceramics, and film. Her most recent series, *We are the Sun: A Photographic Tribute to Black Community*, celebrates the intergenerational wisdom of ThirdSpace Action Lab in Cleveland, Ohio. She is the founder of *The Beautiful Project (TBP)* and the lead curator of TBP's past exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Uris Center for Education, Pen, Lens, and Soul: The Story of The Beautiful Project. Her work is featured in Kleaver Cruz's recent book, *The Black Joy Project: A Literary and Visual Love Letter to How We Thrive*. At the core of her organizing practice, Jamaica is committed to telling sacred stories of possibility through interdisciplinary making.

Reverence: Hair Memory Through Images is a photographic testament to Black hair. Here, stylists and barbers become the hair artists, and the Black people who sit in their chairs become the muse. This exhibition celebrates the long-held tradition of being immersed in images while you wait for your turn in the chair. Lookbooks filled with style options, walls adorned with even more. Comprised of 43 artworks, *Reverence* features a contemplative short film and vibrant large-scale portraits that center our global histories, presented as sacred exhibitions in everyday spaces.

Read more about the artist: www.jamaicagilmer.com

Jamaica Gilmer in Conversation with Dr. Jasmine Cobb |
October 29 | 6:30PM | Brown Gallery

Dialogue moderated by Dr. LeRhonda Manigault-Bryant, Director of the Sonja Haynes Stone Center featuring Jamaica Gilmer, Artist/Curator of *Reverence* and Dr. Jasmine Cobb, author of *New Growth, The Art and Texture of Black Hair*.



MOORE UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM (MURAP)

This summer, 21 exceptional scholars from 18 universities successfully completed MURAP. In addition to working on original research projects with a UNC faculty, Fellows also actively participated in the 2026 MURAP conference, held June 17-18, 2026. Titled, “Knowledge, Care, and the Making of Collective Futures”, the conference opened with a poetry reading by 2024 Chapel Hill Poet Laureate, Dr. Cortland Gilliam.

The keynote was delivered by Dr. Kimberly Hardy. Dr. Hardy is core faculty at Antioch University in the Doctor of Education in Educational and Professional Practice program, and is a MURAP alumnus, as well as a previous MURAP staff member, and we were delighted to welcome her back to MURAP as the keynote speaker. Dr. Hardy’s remarks centered the conference theme by focusing on knowledge, care, and collective futures in relation research and community building. She also shared the impact of MURAP on her professional life at other moments during the conference. Also at the conference, Fellows had the opportunity to hear from and meet with faculty from Carolina and beyond, including NC State, Duke University, University of Pennsylvania, Villanova University, as well as from recent MURAP alumni.

Fellows presented their research with the broader UNC community and invited guests at the end-of-program poster symposium.

Congratulations, 2026 MURAP Fellows! We celebrate your hard work, dedication, and achievements, and can’t wait to see all that you will accomplish in the future!





COMMUNIVERSITY YOUTH PROGRAM (CYP)

Thirty-two scholars participated in the inaugural Black N STEM Annual Conference, which provided students with opportunities to connect, learn, and explore pathways in STEM. Students heard from Tiffany Greene, Sr. Project Manager for Constellation Clean Energy in a conversation moderated by Dr. Cheryl Woods Giscombe, gaining valuable insights into STEM education and career opportunities. The conference also featured an interactive engagement fair with hands-on STEM activities led by RENCI and Universal SciCom. Scholars had the opportunity to learn how to fly drones, explore new technologies, and connect with UNC student organizations. The conference created a welcoming space for scholars to build connections, discover new areas of interest, and see the many ways they can engage and succeed in STEM.

“Our children learned about the Stone Center and the history and legacy it holds, they played with drones, built things with Legos and learned about new career paths in STEM. The most amazing part of this program today was the connections we made. We Africans believe it takes a village to mold children into awesome adults. The Stone Center has become one of our villages. As immigrant families, so many of our children have no extended families to interact with here in the US and today, the adults as well as the children got together and had fun, and we hope to grow this bond.”

—Ms. Ijeoma Eke

Parent of 3rd Grader who attended the
Black N STEM Annual Conference

SAVE THE DATE

September

2026 Diaspora Festival of Black and Independent Film Screening

The Devil Wears Madras (47 MIN), Prayer (14 MIN) and Driftwood (7 MIN)

September 10 | 6:30 PM | Hitchcock Room

2026 Diaspora Festival of Black and Independent Film Screening

Washed, Cleansed and Buried (7 MIN), What We Carry (14 MIN), Tale of a Sundown Town (20 MIN), The Garden of Healing (31 MIN)

September 17 | 6:30 PM | Hitchcock Room

Exhibition Opening and Artist Talk - Reverence: Hair Memory Through Images by Jamaica Gilmer

September 24 | 6:30 PM | Brown Gallery

October

2026 Diaspora Festival of Black and Independent Film Screening

Headliner Film: – Moving Masculinity by Esther A. Armah

October 1 | 6:30 PM | Hitchcock Room / Auditorium

Masterclass / Story Telling and Short Film Workshop with Resita Cox

October 8 | 3 PM | Hitchcock Room

2026 Diaspora Festival of Black and Independent Film Screening

Reverence: Reclaiming the Forgotten (32 MIN), Way Back Home (20 MIN), Good Home Training (12 MIN)

October 22 | 12:05 PM | Hitchcock Room

In Conversation

Dialogue moderated by Dr. LeRhonda Manigault-Bryant, Director of the Sonja Haynes Stone Center featuring Jamaica Gilmer, Artist/ Curator of *Reverence* and Dr. Jasmine Cobb, author of *New Growth*, *The Art and Texture of Black Hair*

October 29 | 6:30 PM | Brown Gallery and Hitchcock Room

November

2026 Diaspora Festival of Black and Independent Film Screening

Viva Yurumanguí (80 MIN)

November 5 | 6:30 PM | Hitchcock Room

2026 Diaspora Festival of Black and Independent Film Screening

The Eternal Song: Eseuseu (61 MIN)

November 10 | 6:30 PM | Hitchcock Room

2026 Stone Memorial Lecture by Award-Winning Author, Scholar and Educator, Dr. Alexis Pauline Gumbs

November 17 | 6:30 PM | Stone Center Auditorium





Scan to tune in to
Stone Written

STONE WRITTEN PODCAST: CULTURE. HISTORY. LEGACY

Stone Written (@stonewrittenpod) is an educational foray into the rich tapestry of Black experience, with navigating life at a PWI taking center stage. Hosted by Dr. Rhon Manigault-Bryant (@DoctorRMB), listeners can expect candid takes, insightful interviews, captivating stories, and an audio journey that honors the resilience and brilliance of our communities. Tune in and experience the official podcast of the Sonja Haynes Stone Center at UNC-Chapel Hill, where our culture resonates, our history illuminates, and our legacy elevates.



OUR DIRECTOR'S TOP SEVEN PODCASTS

1. Stone Written
2. LeVar Burton Reads
3. September: A Podcast for Loveships
4. Holding Court with Ebony K. Williams
5. Grief'd Up with Rebecca Feinglos
6. Great Grief with Nnena Freelon
7. Criminal

Pictured: Dr. Rhon Manigault-Bryant, host of Stone Written, in the Stone Center's Podcast Room.



STOP BY THE STONE CENTER'S DISPLAY AT THE UNC VISITORS CENTER ON E. FRANKLIN ST. AND LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR MISSION AND IMPACT.

You can also stop by the Stone Center. The Stone Center building and library are open from 7:30 a.m. to 10 p.m.

STONE CENTER WORD SCRAMBLE

Instructions: Unscramble each word using the clue provided.

Hint: All words reflect the mission, vision and core values of the Sonja Haynes Stone Center.

First five correct entries win exclusive Stone Center swag!

Email your answers and contact info to stonecenter@unc.edu by October 31, 2026.

Look out for the answer key in our next *Milestones* Spring 2027 edition!

1. **ARSIDAPO**
Clue: The global communities of people of African descent studied and celebrated by the Stone Center.
2. **SREACHRE**
Clue: Scholarly inquiry that deepens understanding of Black life and history.
3. **EULTCRU**
Clue: Creative and intellectual expressions highlighted through exhibitions and programs.
4. **MOMCUTYNI**
Clue: Campus and public audiences the Stone Center actively engages.
5. **TISORHY**
Clue: The study of the past that informs the present and shapes the future.
6. **GNEAGMNETE**
Clue: Meaningful interaction between scholars, students, artists, and the public.
7. **REUETCL**
Clue: A public talk by a scholar, author or artist hosted by the Stone Center.
8. **NOKEWGEDL**
Clue: What the Stone Center creates and shares through research and education.
9. **ECYGAL**
Clue: The long-lasting impact and contributions of Dr. Sonja Haynes Stone.
10. **NAOFRTMASNIOTR**
Clue: The process of positive change and evolution inspired by the Stone Center's work.

STONE CENTER STAFF DIRECTORY

LeRhonda Manigault-Bryant
Director
 919-962-9001
rhon@unc.edu

Sheriff Drammeh
Associate Director
 919-843-2669
sheriff7@email.unc.edu

Kadejah Murray
Executive Assistant
 919-962-9001
kadejahm@email.unc.edu

Javier Jaimes-Ayala
Facilities Manager
 919-962-7025
jaimes@email.unc.edu

Safiyyah Elahi
*Community and Undergraduate
 Programs Coordinator*
 919-962-7264
selahi@unc.edu

Kara Endsley
Philanthropy Officer
 919-962-0395
karase@unc.edu

Neha Chhabra
Public Communications Specialist
 919-962-7340
nchhabra@unc.edu

Rodney Whitmore
Building Security Officer
 919-962-9001
rwhitmor@email.unc.edu

Stone Center Library Staff

Gregg Moore
Stone Center Library Manager
 919-843-5804
moorejg@email.unc.edu

Stone Center Faculty Leaders

Kumi Silva
*Faculty Director, Moore
 Undergraduate Research
 Apprenticeship Program (MURAP)*
 919-962-9001
kumi@email.unc.edu

Cheryl Woods Giscombe
Faculty Fellow
 919-966-9905
cheryl.giscombe@unc.edu

Meredith D. Clark
Faculty Fellow
 434-253-5563
mdc2010@live.unc.edu



WHAT'S HAPPENING AT THE STONE CENTER?

1. View our Events Page:
<https://stonecenter.unc.edu/upcoming-events>
2. Subscribe to our *Stepping Stones* e-newsletter on our homepage: www.stonecenter.unc.edu
3. Follow our social media platforms
4. Email us at stonecenter@unc.edu
5. Phone us at 919-962-9001



Share your Stone Center story—whether it's a meaningful program, connection, or moment that stayed with you, **YOUR** story matters, and we'd love to hear it.



Scan to look at our year's key highlights in our Fiscal Year 2026 Impact Report.



NEW STAFF

Kadejah Murray is a native of Fayetteville, North Carolina. She graduated from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 2017 with a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology and Women's and Gender Studies.

Following graduation, Kadejah joined the UNC-Chapel Hill staff as the University Program Associate in the Office of Faculty Governance, where she has served for nine years. Throughout her tenure, she has supported faculty governance initiatives and contributed to fostering collaboration across the university community.

Kadejah is a former delegate of the UNC-Chapel Hill Employee Forum and a former member of the Association for Women Faculty and Professionals (AWFP) at UNC-Chapel Hill. She is committed to supporting higher education through collaborative leadership, effective administration, and meaningful service to the university community.

NEW FACULTY FELLOWS

Dr. Cheryl L. Woods Giscombé, PhD, PMHNP-BC is a distinguished professor, psychiatric nurse practitioner, social/health psychologist, certified health coach, and certified mindfulness teacher. Dr. Giscombe is the Senior Associate Dean and Chief Wellness Officer at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Nursing. She is an elected member of the National Academy of Medicine, the American Academy of Nursing, the Academy of Behavioral Medicine, and the Mind & Life Institute. Giscombe was named a Leader in the Field by the American Psychological Association, and her research has been consistently funded by the National Institutes of Health and other national foundations and healthcare organizations for the past twenty-one years.

Dr. Giscombe's research incorporates quantitative and qualitative methods, psychoneuroendocrine and cardiometabolic biomarker data, and community-engaged research approaches to investigate how stress and coping strategies contribute to biopsychosocial mechanisms of pre-diabetes, diabetes, and breast cancer. She develops tailored, mindfulness-based and other integrative, whole-person health interventions to promote



well-being in populations at high risk for chronic health conditions.

She teaches art museum-based contemplative practices, with training from the Harvard Macy Institute. She was a design partner for the Harvard Macy Institute Art Museum-based Health Professions Education Fellowship, and she is a contributor to the Harvard Medical School CME Visual Thinking Strategies for Healthcare course. Dr. Giscombe developed the Superwoman Schema Conceptual Framework, the Giscombe Superwoman Schema Questionnaire, and the Harmony Program.

Dr. Giscombe is a North Carolina native and a graduate of the NC School of Science and Mathematics, North Carolina Central University, Stony Brook University, and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She has published extensively in scientific journals, and she is the author of *The Black Woman's Guide to Coping with Stress: Mindfulness and Self-Compassion Skills to Create a Life of Joy and Well-Being* (New Harbinger, 2024).

Dr. Meredith D. Clark (UNC Ph.D. '14) is an associate professor of race and political communication in the School of Journalism & Media at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She is a co-PI in the Center for Information and Technology & Public Life at UNC-CH. Dr. Clark's research on race, media, and power, has included everything from online community building and online activism to how news media cover Black people and communities.

Her book, *We Tried to Tell Y'all: Black Twitter and Digital Counternarratives*, was published in January 2025 by Oxford University Press, and quickly named one of The New York Times's "Top 5 Recommended Reads." Dr. Clark's research has been published in *New Media & Society*, *Communication & the Public*, the *International Symposium of Online Journalism, Communication, Culture, and Critique*, and *Social Movement Studies*. She also co-edited "Interrogating Digital Blackness," a special issue of *Social Media + Society*. She was an expert source featured in the Hulu docuseries, "Black Twitter: A People's History," and the MSNBC documentary, "Canceled."

In 2015, she was named to The Root 100 as one of the most influential



African Americans in the country. A self-described "recovering journalist," she has worked as a copy editor, reporter, columnist, and editorial board member at the Capitol Outlook (Fla.), the Tallahassee Democrat, and the Raleigh News & Observer. She currently serves as board president for two Black news outlets: the Bay State Banner (Boston) and AFROLA (Los Angeles). She has written for and been quoted in outlets including TheGrio.com, The Washington Post, The Atlantic, The Los Angeles Times, MSNBC's the Ali Velshi Show, and appeared on multiple panels at SXSW. She led the redesign of the News Leaders Association's (formerly American Society of News Editors') annual newsroom diversity survey between 2017 until 2021.

Dr. Clark was a Faculty Fellow with Data & Society in 2020-21 and a Rebooting Social Media Fellow at the Berkman Klein Institute at Harvard University in 2023-24. She has served as a past chair of the Commission of the Status of Women in the Association of Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC), and as vice chair

(2021-2023) and chair (2023-2025) of the organization's Council of Divisions.

2026 DIASPORA FESTIVAL OF BLACK AND INDEPENDENT FILM

Since 2004, the Sonja Haynes Stone Center for Research in Black Culture and History's annual Diaspora Festival of Black and Independent Film has showcased compelling films from across the African diaspora. Festival screenings are known for lively post-screening discussions, thoughtful commentary and opportunities for filmmakers, scholars and audiences to engage in meaningful conversation, critique and contextualization.

Over the years, the festival has built lasting partnerships with campus and community co-sponsors, including the African Studies Center; the Department of African, African American, and Diaspora Studies; the Department of Women's and Gender Studies; the Department of History; the Center for the Study of the American South; the Alliance of Carolina Latinx, American Indian

and Asian American Centers; Ngozi Design Collective; Hayti Heritage Center; Rogers-Eubanks Neighborhood Association; Palace International; Providence 1898; and many others.

The 2026 Diaspora Festival will feature thirteen films spanning a variety of genres, selected from nearly 100 submissions from around the world. Check out the film screening schedule on Page 6.

All screenings are free and open to the public. Unless otherwise noted, screenings will take place at the Stone Center in the Hitchcock Multipurpose Room, Room 111, 150 South Road, Chapel Hill.

Pictured: From the film 'Viva Yurumanguí'





STAY IN TOUCH

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 @sonja-haynes-stone-center-unc-chapel-hill

**SUSTAINABILITY.
PERPETUITY.
SUPPORT.**



The Stone Center