

JESSYKA FINLEY

Intercollegiate Department of Africana Studies

May 2023

EDUCATION

- 2013 **Ph.D. African Diaspora Studies**, University of California, Berkeley
- Dissertation: “Firespitters: Performance, Power, and Payoff in African-American Women’s Humor, 1968-Present” (advisor: Ula Y. Taylor)
- 2008 **M.A. African Diaspora Studies**, University of California, Berkeley
- 2004 **B. A. Black Studies and Legal Studies**, Hampshire College, Amherst, MA

EMPLOYMENT

- 2021- Present Pomona College, Assistant Professor of Africana Studies
- 2016 – 2021 Middlebury College, Assistant Professor of American Studies
- 2014 – 2016 Middlebury College, Postdoctoral Fellow
in American Studies
- 2013 – 2014 University of California, Berkeley, Lecturer
Department of African American Studies

FELLOWSHIPS AND GRANTS

- 2014 Andrew W. Mellon C3 Postdoctoral Fellowship (2 years, \$44,000/year)
- 2014 UC President’s Postdoctoral Fellowship (*Declined*)
- 2012 Institute of Museum and Library Services Fellowship in Museum Practice,
African American Museum in Philadelphia (2 years, \$25,000/year)
- 2012 University of California Dissertation-Year Fellowship, UC Berkeley (1 year,
\$25,000)
- 2010 Mentored Research Fellowship, UC Berkeley (1 year, \$25,000)
- 2008 Fulbright-Hays Group Project Abroad, University of Pennsylvania
- 2007 Foreign Language and Area Studies Year-long Fellowship, UC Berkeley (1 year,
\$21,000)
- 2007 Foreign Language and Area Studies Summer Fellowship, UC Berkeley (3 months,
\$3000)

HONORS AND AWARDS

2017 Jack Rosenbalm Prize for American Humor
2011 Graduate Division Summer Fellowship, UC Berkeley
2010 Outstanding Graduate Student Instructor Award, Graduate Division, UC Berkeley

PUBLICATIONS and PERFORMANCES

Books

Sass: Black Women's Humor and Humanity. (Forthcoming August 2024, University of North Carolina Press.)

Book Chapters

““Believe black women when we talk about pain”: Stand-up Comedy, Confessional Humor, and Disarming Shame.” In progress and under contract at University of Texas Press (academic anthology on stand-up comedy, addiction and mental illness.) (Forthcoming 2025).

“They Say I’m Hopeless: Black Women’s Stand-up and the Politics of Joy.” In progress and under contract at Oxford University Press (academic anthology: *Oxford Handbook of African American Comedy*). (Forthcoming 2025).

“Laugh No Limit: Black Stand Up Comedy.” In progress and under contract at Cambridge: CUP (academic anthology: *Cambridge Companion to Stand-Up Comedy*.) (Forthcoming spring 2024).

“Everyday Politics of Black Women’s Late-Night.” In progress and under contract at Oxford University Press (academic anthology: *Oxford Handbook of Screen Comedy Studies*. (Forthcoming 2024).

“From Awkward to Dope: Black Women Comics in The Alternative Comedy Scene.” Ed. Julie Webber, *The Joke Is On Us: Political Comedy in (Late) Neoliberal Times*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books (Rowman & Littlefield), 2018, pp. 221-245.

Peer-reviewed Articles

Gupta, Hemangini, Carly Thomsen, Jennifer D. Ortegren, Karin Hanta, Jessyka Finley, Kristin Bright, Laurie Essig, Catharine Wright, Patricia Saldarriaga, and Fernando Rocha. “What’s the Use of Feminist and Queer Theory?: On Messy Methods, Archives, and Objects.” *Feminist Studies* 48, no. 3 (2022): 713-743.

Webber, Julie, Mehnaaz Momen, Jessyka Finley, Rebecca Krefting, Cynthia Willett, and Julie Willett. “The Political Force of the Comedic.” *Contemporary Political Theory* (2020): 1-28.

“Irreverence Rules: The Politics of Authenticity and the Carnavalesque Aesthetic in Black South African Women’s Stand-Up Comedy.” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 78, no. 4 (2020): 437-450.

“Black Women’s Satire as (Black) Postmodern Performance.” *Studies in American Humor* Vol. 2, No. 2, Special Issue: “American Satire and the Postmodern Condition” (2016), pp. 236-265.

“Raunch and Redress: Interrogating Pleasure in Black Women’s Stand-Up Comedy.” *The Journal of Popular Culture*, Vol. 49, No. 4 (2016), pp. 780-798.

Non-refereed Articles

2013 “How I Got Ovah”: Humor and Discontent in Women’s Poetry of the Black Arts Movement,” *Jacket2*. Special feature, “Poetry Communities.” University of Pennsylvania, <http://jacket2.org/article/how-i-got-ovah>

Reviews

“To Be Real: Truth and Racial Authenticity in African American Standup Comedy.” *Journal of English Linguistics* 52 (1), 95-99.

“Crazy Funny: Popular Black Satire and The Methods of Madness Laughing to Keep from Dying: African American Satire in the Twenty-First Century.” *Studies in American Humor* (2021) 7(2): 377-382.

Finley, Jessyka and Carly Thomsen. “On Intersectionality: A Review Essay.” *Hypatia* volume 33, no.5 (2019), pp. 1-6.

“On Second Thought.” *Studies in American Humor* 5, no. 2 (2019): 285-287.

Performances and Public Scholarship

2023 “A Comedy of Eras.” Thinking Its Presence Conference, Pomona College, Claremont, CA, March 30. (23-minute stand-up comedy performance)

2023 “Sea of Serenity.” In *In Here: Conversations on Solitude*. Edited by Erin Hogan. Pomona College. (Poem)

2021 Willa Paskin. (Host). (2021, December 7). Truly Tasteless Jokes [Audio podcast episode]. In *Decoder Ring*. Slate. <https://slate.com/podcasts/decoder-ring/2021/12/decoder-ring-truly-tasteless-jokes-80s-politics-free-speech-obscenity-law>. (Podcast panelist)

2014 “Opening act” (for Naomi Ekperigin), Middlebury College, November 14. (9-minute stand-up comedy performance)

PROFESSIONAL PRESENTATIONS

Professional Organizations

- 2024 "I got titties, too!": Butch Body Politics in the Public Sphere." Society for Cinema and Media Studies. Boston, MA. March 15.
- 2023 "Racial Humor: Contexts, Communities, and Conversations." American Humor Studies Association. Saratoga Springs, NY. July 11. (Roundtable panelist)
- 2021 "BITCH WE ON CNN OUTSIDE THE WHITEHOUSE": Finding Black Feminist Humor in Unexpected Places." American Studies Association. Online presentation. October 14.
- 2021 "Comedy is a Rebel Not an Ideologue." American Studies Association. Online Presentation. October 12. (Chair and commentator)
- 2019 "Taking Humor Seriously: Ridicule and The Aesthetics of Resistance." American Studies Association, Honolulu, HI, November 8. (Chair and commentator)
- 2018 "2 Bees From Oakland: Truthful Lies, Sincere Realities, and Freedom Dreams in Black Women's Comedy." American Studies Association, Atlanta, GA, November 10.
- 2018 "For Praxis/For Profit: Black Feminist Humor in the Neoliberal Age." National Women's Studies Association, Atlanta, GA, November 11.
- 2017 "(Un)Hashtagging the Classroom: The Intersectionality of #BlackLivesMatter." National Women's Studies Association, Baltimore, MD, November 18.
- 2017 "'Retrospect For Life': A Feminist Praxis of Teaching Black Lives Matter." American Studies Association, Chicago, IL, November 10.
- 2017 "Dope Queens and Awkward Black Girls: Black Women Stand-Ups in the Alternative Scene." Bucknell University, Lewisburg, PA, April 6.
- 2015 "#blackmisery: The First Meme?" American Studies Association, Toronto, Ontario Canada, October 10.
- 2014 "Hurts So Good: Narratives of Freedom in Black Women's Comedy." American Studies Association, Los Angeles, CA, November 8.
- 2013 "My Body in the Village: Individualism and Liminality in the Narratives of Zora Neale Hurston and Pearl Bailey." Association for the Study of African American Life and History, Jacksonville, FL, October 5.
- 2013 "Pearl Bailey and the Utopian Performative." Critical Ethnic Studies Association, Chicago, IL, September 20.

2012 “Beyond Black: Pearl Bailey and the Politics of Racial Transcendence.” Association for the Study of African American Life and History, Pittsburgh, PA, September 27.

2012 “‘How I Got Ovah’: Humor and Discontent in Women’s Poetry of the Black Arts Movement.” Poetry Communities and the Individual Talent, University of Pennsylvania, April 14.

Invited Talks

2023 “Laugh No Limit: Black Stand Up in the Afrofuture.” University of North Carolina, Zoom Colloquium Series, April 12.

2021 “Whose Pussy is This?: The Pleasure and Politics of Raunch in Black Women’s Comedy.” Concordia University, Montreal, CA, February 25.

2018 “‘Yonder they do not love your flesh’: Ghosts, Strangers, and the Specter of Race.” Clifford Symposium, Middlebury College, Middlebury VT, September 20.

2018 “‘Cut-Eye and Suck-Teeth’”: Charting a Cultural History of Sass in Black Women’s Humor.” University of Vermont, Burlington, VT, April 11.

2018 “‘Cut-Eye and Suck-Teeth’”: Charting a Cultural History of Sass in Black Women’s Humor.” Duke University, Durham, NC, January 30.

2018 “Stories to Pass On.” Clifford Symposium, Middlebury College, Middlebury, VT, September 22.

2018 “Racial Identity and Racial Justice.” Bennington College, Bennington, VT, March 10.

2016 “‘Cut-Eye and Suck-Teeth’”: Charting a Cultural History of Sass in Black Women’s Humor.” St. Michaels College, Burlington VT, March 8.

2015 “2 Bees From Oakland: Truthful Lies, Sincere Realities, and Freedom Dreams in Black Women’s Comedy.” The Gensler Symposium, Middlebury College, April 17.

2015 “What was. What is. What should be?” The Civil Rights Struggle 50 Years Later—In Movement and Word, Middlebury College, March 31.

2014 “Satire and Social Critique in Black Women’s Comedic Performance.” Life of the Mind Faculty Lecture Series, Middlebury College, September 30.

OTHER PRESENTATIONS

2023 “Pleasure and Joy in the Face of Antiblackness,” roundtable talk at Office of Black Student Affairs, April 6.

2023 “Creative Practice, Cultural Production, and Scholarship,” presentation to African

Diaspora Studies alumni at 25th anniversary symposium.

- 2017 “Theatricality and Taboo: A Look at Kara Walker’s Silhouettes,” presentation at Middlebury College Museum of Art, Cerf Gallery, May 5.
- 2009 “Black People, Stand Up!: Toward a New Politics of Performance and Racial Redress,” presentation at St. Clair Drake Symposium for graduate students in African Diaspora Studies at UC Berkeley, May 14.
- 2008 “‘Something More Than a Little Soapbox’: On the Possibilities of Aaron McGruder’s *The Boondocks*.” presentation at St. Clair Drake Symposium for graduate students in African Diaspora Studies at UC Berkeley, May 12.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

- 2023 **Theatre Topics**, ad hoc reviewer
- 2022 **American Humor Studies Association**, Co-Vice President
- 2022 **The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism**, ad hoc reviewer
- 2019 **Women’s Studies Quarterly**, ad hoc reviewer
- 2018 **Studies in American Humor**, ad hoc reviewer
- 2018 **Meridians: Feminism, Race and Transnationalism**, ad hoc reviewer
- 2018 **Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society**, ad hoc reviewer
- 2018 **Feminist Formations**, ad hoc reviewer
- 2017 **Society of Americanists Review**, ad hoc reviewer
- 2012 **Editor**, *Diaspora* newsletter, UC Berkeley, Department of African American Studies

COLLEGE SERVICE

- 2023 **Pomona College**, Analyzing Difference Committee (**Appointed**)
- 2022 **Pomona College**, President’s Advisory Committee on Sustainability (**Appointed**)
- 2022 **Pomona College**, Intercollegiate Department of Africana Studies, Curriculum Committee (**Appointed**)
- 2021 **Pomona College**, Women’s Basketball Faculty Affiliate (**Invited**)
- 2019 **Middlebury College**, Black Studies Major Ad Hoc Committee (**Appointed**)
- 2017 **Middlebury College**, Faculty Council (**Elected**)
- 2017 **Middlebury College**, BOLD Women’s Leadership Network Scholarship Evaluator (**Invited**)
- 2016 **Middlebury College**, Community Council (**Appointed**)
- 2015 **Middlebury College**, Faculty Advisor, Black Student Union (**Invited**)
- 2015 **Middlebury College**, Executive Committee, Program in Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies (**Invited**)
- 2013 **UC Berkeley**, Steering Committee, V&V A. Clark Institute for Engaged Scholars of African American Studies (**Invited**)
- 2012 **UC Berkeley**, Graduate Admission Committee, UC Berkeley, Department of African American Studies (**Invited**)
- 2010 **UC Berkeley**, Organizing Committee, Annual St. Clair Drake Graduate

Symposium, UC Berkeley, Department of African American Studies

COURSES TAUGHT

Pomona College

Introduction to Africana Studies (Fall 2021; Fall 2023)
Unruly Bodies: Black Womanhood in Popular Culture (Fall 2021; Fall 2022)
Black Comic Cultures (Spring 2022; Spring 2023; Spring 2024)
To Tell the Truth Freely: Black Women's Autobiographical Practices (Fall 2023)
Research Methods for Africana Studies (Spring 2022; Spring 2023; Spring 2024)
Critical Fabulations: Black Queer (After)Lives (Fall 2022)

Middlebury College

American Literature and Culture, 1830-1919 (Spring 2019, Spring 2020)
American Comedy: Cultural and Ethnic Perspectives (Winter 2018)
#Blacklivesmatter (Spring 2017 and Fall 2017)
Black Comic Cultures (Fall 2014, 2015; Spring 2017; Fall 2019)
Beyond Intersectionality (Spring 2019)
Introduction to African American Culture (Fall 2016, Spring 2018)
Introduction to Black Studies (Spring 2020)
Writing Black Worlds: Race and the Practice of Ethnography (Spring 2016)
Unruly Bodies: Black Womanhood in Popular Culture (Spring 2015, Fall 2016, Fall 2017; Fall 2019)

UC Berkeley

Black Life and Culture (Spring 2014)
To Tell the Truth Freely: Black Women's Autobiographical Practices (Fall 2013, Spring 2014)
Race, Class, and Gender in the U.S (Fall 2013)
African American Stand-Up Comedy and the Performance of Resistance (Summer 2010, 2011)

PROFESSIONAL REFERENCES

Ula Taylor, Professor in African American Studies, UC Berkeley uyt@berkeley.edu

Brandi W. Catanese, Associate Professor in African American Studies & Theater, Dance and Performance Studies, UC Berkeley catanese@berkeley.edu

Susan Burch, Professor of American Studies, Middlebury College sburch@middlebury.edu

Rachael Joo, Associate Professor of American Studies, Middlebury College
rjoo@middlebury.edu

Maeve Eberhardt, Associate Professor of Linguistics, University of Vermont,

8 Finley CV

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