



**The Inaugural UC Merced Africana Studies
Conference Sponsored by the Academic Senate
and UC Merced Black Alliance**

Our Theme and Purpose



Our conference logo is an adinkrah symbol from the script of the Akan people of Ghana. The name of the symbol is *Sesa Wo Suban*. The inner image is of a star representing the dawning of a new day while the outside is a wheel representing moving forward. The two symbols together mean transformation. We chose this symbol as it represents how one must go through a process when learning what it means to be or become Black in a racialized society. It is indeed a transformative process.

Being and becoming Black are distinct realities. Both circumstances center on complex experiences and realizations of those who identify as Black or who society sees as Black. However, Being Black is an awareness of having a Black identity and what that means in society while Becoming Black is a process by which one comes to understand how the world sees them as Black and what that means for their lives. With this inaugural conference, we invite global scholars to investigate what it means to be and become Black in multiple contexts including but not limited to local, national, and international geographic locations, academia, business, social, political, cultural, public, private, affluent, working class, and tech spaces among others.

As we navigate this topic, we hope that you are edified by the conversations that will be shared.

Meet Our Keynote Speaker

Whitney N. Laster Pirtle is an Assistant Professor of Sociology and McArthur Foundation Chair in International Justice and Human Rights at the University of California, Merced (UC Merced). She received her B.A. from Grand Valley State University, and earned her M.A. and Ph.D. in Sociology from Vanderbilt University. At UC Merced, she has affiliations with Public Health and Critical Race and Ethnic Studies departments and directs the Sociology of Health and Equity (SHE) Lab. Her research explores issues relating to race, identity, inequality, health equity, and Black feminist praxis. In addition to her work on racial capitalism and Covid-19, she recently published a piece in *Gender & Society* titled “Structural Gendered Racism Revealed in Pandemic Times.” Her co-edited volume *Black Feminist Sociology: Perspectives and Praxis* is forthcoming with Routledge. She won the 2020 A. Wade Smith Award for Teaching, Mentoring, and Service from the Association of Black Sociologists. In 2021 published a path-breaking co-edited volume *Black Feminist Sociology: Perspectives and Praxis* with Routledge Press. She is currently working on two book manuscripts, one of race in post-apartheid South Africa and the other is in contract with Polity Press tentatively titled, *Black Identities: The Expansiveness of Blackness in the US*.



Panels and Presenters

Session I: An Interdisciplinary Examination of the Black Feminine

Mary Okocha-Ajila, Beauty by Size? Questioning the Portrayal of the ‘Big’ African Woman in African Movies, Kean University, Wenzhou

Selam Kidane, ‘Deconstructing the Angry Black Woman’ University of California, San Francisco

Eucharia Okwudili Ugwu, I am Black and Beautiful: My Journey to Becoming Black, University of Ibadan, Nigeria

Kat Cosby, “The Geopoetics of the Quilombo in Early-Twentieth Century São Paulo” California State University Channel Islands

Tolulope Esther Fadeyi, “Beyond Being Black: Maternity Care and Knowledge Production in Yorubaland, Southwest Nigeria.” University of Basel, Switzerland

Session IA: Emergent Theory on Black Ontology

Stephen Hamilton, Blackness emerges from the waters: Black Color Symbolism in Africa, Harvard

Aladépupo Julius Oloyede, Innovative Theorizing and Methods of Disciplinary Research on Blackness, University of Lagos, Nigeria

Razaq Salau, BEING TO BECOMING BLISSFUL “OMO’LU’WABI” IN CONTEXT OF BLACKS LEGACY, Onisona Tower

Anique John The Hyphenated Black-British Identity: A Dilemma & The Afro-English Solution, California State University, Long Beach

Donald Watson, Black-American Visibility in Barack Obama’s Dreams from My Father and Michelle Obama’s Becoming, University of Ibadan, Nigeria

Semassa Boko “Realize We Are at War” University of California, Irvine

Session II: Decoloniality, Philosophy and Dialectics of Blackness in Literature

Eva Bohler, Through an Afrocentric Lens: Afrocentricity and Howard Thurman’s The Luminous Darkness, The Search for Common Ground, and Jesus and the Disinherited. California State University, Long Beach

Ryan J. Fisher, James Baldwin's Dialectical Juju: Alienation, Work and Money in 'This Morning, This Evening, So Soon' USCB

Abigail Onowosemenmen Oaikhena, Literature and Religious Conflict in the Postcolonial World: A Discuss on Being Black in Okey Ndibe's Foreign Gods, Inc. Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria

Lucky Onebunne and Michael Chukwuahluka Uyanne, Discursive Psychology of Traumatized Nigerians in EC Osundu's Voice of America, Nnamdi Azikiwe University

Session IIA: Gender and Identity

Wendy Vuyi Nkosi, "Seclusion of women's contribution in history: Pan-Africanism Perspective" Institute of Pan African Through and Conversation, South Africa

Olubunmi Omotola, Nigerian Women at the Frontiers and Intersection of Decolonisation, Olabisi Onabanjo University Ago Iwoye Nigeria

Joseph Moyinoluwa Talabi, Coloniality of Being and Black Identity in Postcolonial Africa: Experience from Nigeria, Lagos State University

Ebenezer Ayesu, Heritage Christian (University) College, Afama, Accra, Ghana and Wilson Dabuo University of Education, Winneba, Ghana, Socio-Cultural Religious and Political Connotations of Festivals and identity traits in the Northwestern Region of Ghana

Violet Walker, Black Women in Non-Black Spaces, University of California, Merced

Session IIB: Round table 1: Black Agency in the US Legal System

Brian Roberts
Marcel Woodruff
Tirien Steinbach
Brandon Greene
Akiva Kirkland
Jullanar Williams

Keynote: "I'm Rooting for Everyone Black: Reframing Blackness as a Win When the World Says It Is the Problem"

Session III: Navigating Black Identity, Expression, and Belonging in Higher Ed Spaces

Lindsey Villareal, Navigating Blackness from California to Alabama: Cultivating Consciousness and Critical Thinking for African American Studies Majors at UC Berkeley

Rasheed Shabazz, #BlackatCal, Onyx Express, and Digital Storytelling at UC Berkeley

Marie Tano, Being Black-American: the use of Afro-Diasporic linguistic resources in style-shifting and code-switching across sociocultural contexts, Stanford

Session IIIA: Black Identity in Digital Humanities and Media

Mope Ogunbowale, "I am Black and Proud: Engaging Dis courses on Blackness within Nigerian Popular Music, 1960s-1990s," University at Buffalo, New York

Samantha Tucker, Digitizing American Antagonisms: Digital Humanities, Resistance, and Blackness, University of California Merced

Osarugue Otebele, The Nigerians and the Others: Blackness in the Nollywood Imagination, UC Berkeley

Chantrell Lewis, Unbound: The Performing Arts and the Social-Emotional Development of Black Youth, University of California, Irvine

Session IIIB: Diasporic Activism, Expression, and Traditions that Shape Identity

Keith Claybrook, "Black Power and Black Identity in Los Angeles: Renaming and Redefining Black Racial Identity Nationally and Locally" California State University, Long Beach

Tara Kendall, "Based on a True Story: Joking Kinships, Griots, and Black American Comedy" University of California, Santa Barbara

Session IIIC: Conceptualizing Postcolonial Realities

Danwei Zhu, Regional Insecurity Dilemma in West Africa: Revisiting the Casamance Conflict, University of Washington

Jerri Hilt, Repatriation of African Ancestral-Human Remains: Fiction and Fissures in Britain's 'Museum-led' processes, Independent Researcher

Angelica Pesarini, Becoming Black. Violence, Agency and Resistance in colonial and postcolonial Italy, University of Toronto, Canada

Session IV: Round table 2: Being and Becoming Black

Dr. Adebisi

Dr. Ghezzehei

Adeola Fagbayibo

Ngqabutho Moyo

Doreen Odii-Kenneth

Kunle Adewole

Greg Mutumi

Ejemen Ogbebor
Bamidele Onipede
Joy Omeiza
Oscar Montero-Hernandez
Sabrina Rawson