Black Matrilineage, Photography, and Representation

Lopez-Diago, Zoraida, Deschler Canossi, Lesly

Published by Leuven University Press

Lopez-Diago, Zoraida and Lesly Deschler Canossi.
Black Matrilineage, Photography, and Representation: Another Way of Knowing.


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CONTRIBUTORS

Tomi Akitunde is the founder and editor-in-chief of mater mea, a platform that answers Black mothers’ biggest questions about motherhood, life, and career through content and community (she’s come to think of it as Black Mom Google). Raised in Kansas City, Missouri on a healthy diet of books and magazines, her decision to be a journalist was inevitable. After graduating from the University of Chicago and Northwestern’s Medill School of Journalism, Tomi moved to New York City to further her journalism career, freelancing for The New York Times, Fast Company, Fortune.com, and The Root to name a few. Always bothered by the lack of diversity in her favorite magazines—she even wrote letters to Ebony and Essence when she was 12, proposing they create a teenaged version of their publications and make her editor-in-chief—Tomi was especially struck by the dearth in mainstream media of professional women of color. mater mea became the answer to that gap in the media, and a safe space for so many mothers trying to find themselves in a media landscape that equates motherhood with whiteness.

Grace Aneiza Ali is a Curator and an Assistant Professor in the Departments of Art and Art History at Florida State University in Tallahassee, Florida. She also serves as Curator-at-Large for the Caribbean Cultural Center African Diaspora Institute in New York City. Her curatorial, research, and teaching practices center on curatorial activism, art and social justice, art and migration, global contemporary art, and art of the Caribbean Diaspora with a focus on her homeland Guyana. She is an Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts Curatorial Fellow and Fulbright Scholar. Her essays on contemporary art have been published in Asian Diasporic Visual Cultures and the Americas, Wasafiri, Harvard’s Transition Magazine, Small Axe, and Nueva Luz Photographic Journal, among others. Her recent book, Liminal Spaces: Migration and Women of the Guyanese Diaspora, explores the art and migration narratives of women of Guyanese heritage. Ali was born in Guyana and migrated to the USA when she was fourteen years old.
Emily Brady earned her PhD in American Studies from the University of Nottingham. Her PhD thesis, “I Didn’t Know She Took Pictures”: African American Women Photographers in the Long Civil Rights Movement explores how African American photographers cultivated and reclaimed space through their photography. Their work—which frequently emphasises the role of African American women’s grassroots activism—poses a challenge to the dominant canon of Civil Rights photography. Brady has presented her work at national (British Association of American Studies Annual Conference, University of Sussex, 2019; Historians of Twentieth Century United States, University of Liverpool, 2019) and international conferences (College Arts Association, Chicago, 2020; North-Eastern Modern Language Association, Boston 2020). For her research and contribution to the postgraduate community, Brady was awarded the Heymann Research Scholarship, University Tri Campus Postgraduate Prize in March 2020. Since September 2021, Brady has been working as a Teaching Fellow in American History at the University of Leeds.

Lesly Deschler Canossi (she/her) is a photographer, photography educator, and cultural producer. She holds an MFA from the Maryland Institute College of Art, where she focused on the museological object’s role in constructing culture. She is a faculty member at the International Center of Photography (ICP) and has taught at Columbia University, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Lamar Dodd School of Art in Cortona, Italy and has lectured at Tate Modern, ICP, among others. In 2016, she and Zoraida Lopez-Diago co-created Women Picturing Revolution, an organization dedicated to woman photographers who have documented conflicts, crises, and revolutions in private realms and public spaces. Along with Lopez-Diago, she edited Black Matrilineage, Photography, and Representation: Another Way of Knowing, Leuven University Press. Her ongoing personal photographic practice and teaching projects Domestic Negotiations (2012-present) and Into the Fold: Artist / Mother Identity (2019-present) explore autonomy, loss and the role of the mother as artist.

Nicole J. Caruth is a Black queer writer, educator, and certified holistic health coach. As a curator, her work examines the intersections of place, race, food, and health. Her writing has been published widely in print and online. In 2019, she was a recipient of the Arts Writers grant from the Andy Warhol Foundation and Creative Capital.
Haile Eshe Cole received her PhD in Anthropology from the University of Texas at Austin with a concentration in African Diaspora Studies and a portfolio in Women’s and Gender Studies. Her scholarly interests include Black feminisms, community-engaged/social justice research methodology, Black motherhood, health, and more recently visual media. Over the years, she has conducted research on women’s mass incarceration and Black women’s maternal and infant health disparities in Texas. Her most recent research project considered how rates of maternal and infant mortality are impacted by on-going processes of racism and structural inequality. Haile is currently an Assistant Professor at the University of Connecticut but has devoted many years to community and social justice activism centered on the needs of poor and working-class mothers and women of color. She is passionate about reproductive justice work. Most important, she is the mother of two beautiful children and in her free time enjoys spending time with family, listening to music, yoga, creating art, and photography.

Atalie Gerhard (she/her) is a doctoral researcher in the International Research Training Group “Diversity: Mediations of Difference in Transcultural Spaces” at Saarland University. The working title of her project is “Diversity and Resistance in North American Women’s Containment Narratives from the 21st Century”. In addition, she is an engaged member of the Emerging Scholars’ Forum of the Association for Canadian Studies in German-speaking Countries. Thereby, her research interests include Black and Indigenous cultural resistance against colonialism and self-representations of women with ethnic backgrounds in North American art and literature. She holds a Master of Arts degree in North American Studies as well as a Bachelor of Arts degree in English and American Studies and French Studies from the Friedrich-Alexander-University of Erlangen-Nuremberg, where she had also worked as a student research assistant and interim secretary. The Bavarian State Ministry of Work and Social Affairs, Family, and Integration awarded her a certificate for civil commitment for providing integrational services as a volunteer in a refugee shelter with the local press reporting on her work. She speaks German, English, French, Spanish, Italian, and Romanian at various levels and enjoys learning Arabic in her spare time.

Kellie Carter Jackson is an Associate Professor in the Department of Africana Studies at Wellesley College. She is the author of the award-winning book, Force & Freedom: Black Abolitionists and the Politics of Violence which won
Régine Michelle Jean-Charles is the Dean’s Professor of Culture and Social Justice, Director of Africana Studies, and Professor of Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies at Northeastern University. A Black feminist scholar who works at the intersections of race, gender and justice from a global perspective, her scholarship and teaching include subjects and areas such as rape culture, Black France, African diasporic literatures, Caribbean Studies, Haiti and the Haitian diaspora. She is the author of Looking for Other Worlds: Black Feminism and Haitian Fiction (2022), The Trumpet of Conscience Today (2021) and Conflict Bodies: The Politics of Rape Representation in the Francophone Imaginary (2014). She has written numerous publications that have appeared in books, edited volumes, and peer-reviewed journals. She is also a regular contributor to media outlets like Ms. Magazine, The Boston Globe, WGBH, and Cognoscenti, where she has weighed in on topics such as #metoo, Black girlhood, and issues affecting the Haitian diaspora.

Rachel Lobo is a PhD Candidate and Sessional Lecturer with the Faculty of Environmental and Urban Change at York University, supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. Her research explores how archival practices can sustain people’s histories of resistance and create historical agency. Rachel received her Masters in Photographic Preservation and Collections Management from Ryerson University. She has held curatorial and archival internships at both the Royal Ontario Museum and the Ryerson Image Centre, where she investigated the role that photographs played in
documenting Britain’s colonial activities in India, and catalogued press photographs of the Civil Rights Movement, respectively. Her work has been published in *Archivaria: The Journal for the Association of Canadian Archivists*, and the *International Journal of Canadian Studies*.

**Zoraida Lopez-Diago** stands at the intersection of visual, social and environmental justice; she is a photographer, curator, activist and co-founder of Women Picturing Revolution (WPR) with Lesly Deschler Canossi. Her photographs focuses on themes of gender, race, incarceration, and migration and have been exhibited at institutions throughout the US and Latin America. She has lectured at Harvard University, the Tate Modern, and La Universidad de Antioquia (Colombia), among others. Zoraida is currently writing an essay, paired with images, on the intersection of photography, the Black body and nature. She co curated “Picturing Black Girlhood,” an exhibition from February to August 2022, as part of the conference “Black Portraiture[s] VII: Play and Performance” at Rutgers University-Newark and with Deschler Canossi, co-edited *Black Matrilineage, Photography and Representation: Another Way of Knowing*, published by Leuven University Press, distributed by Cornell University Press in North America.

**Brie McLemore** is a PhD student in the Jurisprudence and Social Policy Program at the University of California, Berkeley. Brie has a Master of Public Policy/Master of Arts in Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies from Brandeis University and a Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology and Gender Studies from the New College of Florida. Her work has been published in the *Virginia Law Review*, the *Iowa Journal of Cultural Studies*, and *Truthout*. Brie is a proud Florida native who enjoys fencing, caring for her plants, and watching reality television with her dog Pickles.

**Renée Mussai** is a London-based curator, writer, and scholar with a special interest in Black feminist, queer and afro-diasporic lens-based visual arts practices. She is Senior Curator and Head of Curatorial & Collection at Autograph, London, a charitable arts organisation working internationally in photography and film. Mussai has organised numerous exhibitions in Europe, America and Africa, co-commissioned a diverse constituency of artists, and developed a range of research-led artistic programmes—including the critically-acclaimed ‘Black Chronicles—The Missing Chapter’ (2014–present; publication forthcoming 2022/23). Her recent editorial and curatorial projects include
‘Care, Contagion, Community – Self & Other’ (2021), ‘Lina Iris Viktor: Some Are Born to Endless Night—Dark Matter’ (2019/20) and ‘Dark Testament’ (2020); ‘Zanele Muholi: Somnyama Ngonyama—Hail the Dark Lioness’ (2017–2021); ‘Phoebe Boswell: The Space Between Things’ (2018/19); ‘Black Chronicles IV’ (2018), and the audio-visual installation ‘The African Choir 1891 Re-Imagined’ (2016–18). In 2018, she co-curated the collaborative ‘Women’s Mobile Museum’ for the Philadelphia Photo Arts Center, initiated by Zanele Muholi. Mussai lectures internationally on photography, visual culture, and curatorial activism; her writing has appeared in numerous artist monographs and anthologies by Aperture, Phaidon, Tate, and Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art, amongst others. In 2019, she co-guest edited Issue 6: Volume 33 of Critical Arts entitled ‘Ecologies of Care: Speculative Photographies, Curatorial Re-Positionings’ (Taylor and Francis, 2020). Previous edited volumes include ‘James Barnor: Ever Young’ (2015) and ‘Glyphs: Acts of Inscription’ (2013). Mussai is also Research Associate at the Visual Identities in Art and Design Research Centre, University of Johannesburg, and Associate Lecturer at University of the Arts London. Since 2009, she has been a regular guest curator and former non-resident fellow at the Hutchins Centre for African & African American Research at Harvard University.

Marly Pierre-Louis is a copywriter, editor and creative strategist living in Amsterdam. She is the co-founder of Amsterdam Black Women collective—a community of diasporic Black women chasing their dreams through Europe and co/editor for Versal Editions; a small press dedicated to community-centered publishing and curation. Marly sits at the feet of Toni Morrison, James Baldwin, and Hip-Hop. She is a first-generation Haitian-American, a big sister, a mother, and an introverted Taurus (Leo moon) through and through. When she’s not working, she can usually be found practicing tarot, listening to emo music, reading speculative fiction, and overwatering her plants.

Jonathan Michael Square is an Assistant Professor of Black Visual Culture at Parsons School of Design. He has a PhD in history from New York University, a master’s degree from the University of Texas at Austin, and a B.A. from Cornell University. He has written for British Art Studies, Fashionista, Fashion Studies Journal, Hyperallergic, International Journal of Fashion Studies, Refinery29, Small Axe, and Vestoj. He has also curated Slavery in the Hands of Harvard, Odalisque Atlas: White History as Told through Art, and Freedom from Truth: Self-Portraits of Nell Painter. A proponent in the power of social media
as a platform for radical pedagogy and the democratization of higher education, he founded and runs the digital humanities project *Fashioning the Self in Slavery and Freedom*, which explores the intersection of fashion and slavery.

**Susan Thompson** is curator and writer based in Brooklyn. Since 2020, she has served as project manager for *Simone Leigh: Sovereignty* presented at the U.S. Pavilion as part of the 59th Venice Biennale. From 2009-2020, she worked as a curator at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, where she organized numerous exhibitions, including the two-part project *Implicit Tensions: Mapplethorpe Now* (2019-20), *Simone Leigh: Loophole of Retreat* (2019), *Anicka Yi: Life is Cheap* (2017), and *Paul Chan: Nonprojections for New Lovers* (2015). She also provided curatorial support for solo exhibitions of artists Carrie Mae Weems (2014), Rineke Dijkstra (2012), and Francesca Woodman (2012), as well as the thematic group exhibition *Photo-Poetics: An Anthology* (2015–16). Her writing has appeared in various volumes, including *Ghada Amer: Painting in Revolt* (Skira, 2022), *Mernet Larsen* (Kerbler-Verlag, 2021), *Danh Vo: Take My Breath Away* (Guggenheim Museum, 2018), and *Adam Pendleton: The Black Dada Reader* (Walther König Books, 2017), among others. Thompson holds an MA in modern art from Columbia University and a BA in art history and political science from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

**Salamishah Tillet** is a Pulitzer Prize winning writer, scholar, and activist who is the Henry Rutgers Professor of African American and African Studies and Creative Writing at Rutgers University, Newark. She is a contributing critic-at-large at the New York Times, author of “Sites of Slavery: Citizenship and Racial Democracy in the Post-Civil Rights Imagination” and “In Search of the Color Purple: A Story of an American Masterpiece.” She is currently working on a biography on the civil rights icon, Nina Simone, for which she received the Whiting Foundation Creative Non-Fiction Grant in 2020. In 2021, she became the director of Express Newark, a center for socially engaged art and design at Rutgers University, Newark as well as co-hosted and produced the podcast “Because of Anita” with Cindi Leive on the 30th anniversary of Anita Hill’s testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee. She was also named a 2021 Carnegie Fellow by the Carnegie Corporation of New York for her next project, “In Lieu of the Law: A Cultural History of the #Me Too Movement.”

**Scheherazade Tillet** is a photo-based artist, curator, and feminist activist who explores the themes of Blackness, pleasure, play, and trauma, and
healing. Blending social documentary, staged portraits, and social practice, Tillet intimately photographs the inner lives and public performances of Black girlhood throughout the United States and the Caribbean, while also centering the gaze of and actively collaborating with her Black girl subjects. Born in Boston, growing up in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Newark, NJ, and now working in Chicago, Tillet received her B.A. in Child Development from Tufts University with a minor in Fine Arts from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, and her Masters of Art in Art Therapy from the School of the Art Institute in Chicago. Her work has been exhibited at Columbia University, Rutgers University, Newark, and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago. In 2021, she was an artist-in-residence at the Weinberg/Newton Gallery in Chicago, and selected by the Four Corners Public Arts project to exhibit her photo mural, “Will You Be My Monument” in downtown Newark, NJ. She is currently the Executive Director of A Long Walk Home, a nonprofit that she founded with her sister, Salamishah, in 2003, that uses art to empower young people to end violence against girls and women.

**Jennifer Turner** is Assistant Professor of Sociology at Hollins University in Roanoke, Virginia. Her research focuses on the intersection of race, class, and gender in the context of families. Currently, her research focuses on how the intersection of race, class, and gender shapes the lives and experiences of low-income African American single mothers. Her work can be found in the journals *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity* and *Social Currents*.

**Sasha Turner** is Associate Professor of History at Johns Hopkins University. She is the author of Contesting Bodies: Pregnancy, Childrearing, and Slavery in Jamaica, winner of the Julia Cherry Spruill Book Prize from the Southern Association of Women Historians, the Berkshire Conference of Women Historians Book Prize, earning an Honorable Mention from the Murdo J. McLeod Book Prize in the Latin American and Caribbean Section, Southern Historical Association. She is currently working on a new book on slavery and emotions. A recent article from this book, “The Nameless and the Forgotten: Maternal Grief Sacred Protection, and the Archive of Slavery” published in Slavery and Abolition has also won awards from the African American Intellectual History Society; the Association of Black Women Historians; Southern Association of Women Historians; the North American Conference on British Studies; and the Latin American & Caribbean Section.
of the Southern Historical Association. She also serves as co-President of the Coordinating Council for Women in History.

**Rhaisa Kameela Williams** is Assistant Professor of Theater at Princeton University. Williams’ research uses mixed-archive methods—spanning across literature, family history, archives, and public policy—to focus on the intersections of Blackness, motherhood, affect, and disquieting modes of freedom. Currently, she is writing her manuscript, *Mama, Don’t You Weep: Motherhood, Blackness, and Performances of Grief*, that traces the intimate relationship between grief and Black motherhood from the civil rights movement to the present. Offering discontinuous readings of grief, the book asserts that Black women, no matter their personal relationship to offspring or othermothering, have specifically mobilized grief inherent to Black motherhood as a tactic to perform, remake, and critique forms of citizenship. Williams earned her Ph.D and M.A. in Performance Studies at Northwestern University and a B.A. in Africana Studies from the University of Pennsylvania. Her work has been supported by the New England Regional Fellowship Consortium, and the Mellon, Woodrow Wilson, and Ford foundations; and has appeared or is forthcoming in *College Literature*, *Transforming Anthropology*, *Callaloo*, and *Biography: An Interdisciplinary Quarterly*.