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Education:

Ph.D. in Philosophy, Harvard University, 2022 (expected)

M.A. in Philosophy, Harvard University, 2017

B.A. in Philosophy, Morehouse College, *summa cum laude*, 2015

Dissertation (long abstract on page 8):

Title: *Cultural Hegemony, Political Movements, and the Problem of Publicity*

Committee: Mark Richard (Chair), Ned Hall, Sally Haslanger, and Danielle Allen

Abstract:

How does social change happen in a political arrangement? My dissertation argues that societies are transformed by the acceptance of “hidden scripts” that challenge the legitimacy of the dominant narratives accepted by the status quo. This “street domain,” as I term it, is important for not only understanding the nature of a public sphere but also for predicting the evolution of the “mainstream” discourse in a political arrangement.

Finally, I argue that in Western culture there is a historical set of norms and incentives that prevent actors from recognizing the value of the “street knowledge” that constitute the content of the hidden scripts in a society. I call this set of norms and incentives the problem of white-mindedness.

Areas of specialization:

Ethics, Political Philosophy, Epistemology, and Philosophy of Race

Areas of competence:

Philosophy of Language, Metaphysics, Philosophy of Mind, and Africana Philosophy

Employment:

Morehouse College – Visiting Scholar, Andrew Young Center for Global Leadership, 2021-2022

Academic Presentations:

- January 2017: Comments on Elizabeth Hupfer, “The Coercive Approach: Problems with a Limited View of Distributive Justice”. Colloquium at the Eastern division of the American Philosophical Association.
- March 2017: Philosophy of Racial Justice. Colloquium at MIT Day of Action.
- January 2018: Comments on Victoria Emery, “Thinning the Veil: Mills, Rawls, and Identity” Colloquium at the Eastern division of the American Philosophical Association.
- August 2018: Beyond Pluralism: Racial Concepts, Pejorative Content, and Racial Eliminativism. International Social Ontology Conference at Tufts University.
- October 2018: Whiteness as a Mental State. Race, Racism, and Beyond. Seminar at the University of New England.
- October 2018: Whiteness as a Mental State. Guest Speaker at Harvard Review of Philosophy Workshop.
- November 2018: Philosophers Engaged with Communities Combatting Racism. National Humanities Conference.
- April 2018: Who Are We Talking To? The Humanities, the Public, and the Streets. MIT Day of Action.

- April 2019: Art, Interpretation, and the Street Disposition. Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study.
- June 2019: Racial Hegemony and the Problem of White-mindedness. Caribbean Philosophical Association at Brown University.
- July 2019: Racial Hegemony and the Problem of White-mindedness. International Society for African Philosophy and Studies (ISAPS) at Mississippi State University.
- October 2019: Racial Hegemony and the Problem of White-mindedness. Third Biennial African World Philosophy Conference at the University of Dar es Salaam (Tanzania).
- November 2019: Race, Climate Change, and the Problem of White-mindedness. Science, Race, and Gender seminar at Boston University.
- November 2019: Examining the Relationship Between Dehumanization and the Problem of White-mindedness. Race, Racism, and Beyond seminar at the University of New England.
- January 2020. Academic Philosophy and the Problem of Belonging. Outsiders Within: Reflections on Being a Low-Income and/or First-Generation Philosopher. Colloquium at the Eastern division of the American Philosophical Association.
- February 2020. Education, Race, and the Problem of White-mindedness. Alumni of Color Conference. Harvard Graduate School of Education.
- March 2020: Can Artificial Intelligence be White-minded? Mind-like Intelligence, Research, and Analysis (MIRA) group. University of Pennsylvania.

- April 2020: Racial Hegemony and the Problem of White-mindedness. North American Society for Social Philosophy panel. Pacific division of American Philosophical Association.
- January 2021: Reflections on Historically Black Colleges and the Problem of White-mindedness. Philosophy of HBCUs panel. Eastern division of American Philosophical Association.
- February 2021: The Philosopher's Role in Solving Wicked Problems. Committee for Diversity and Inclusion Affairs. Gulf Coast Community College.

Public Lectures:

- January 2020: Keynote speaker at the Jackson County, Florida chapter of the NAACP. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Celebration: A New Force for Hope.

Teaching:

Fall 2017: Introduction to Philosophy (with Bernhard Nickel). Teaching Fellow.

Spring 2018: Early Modern Philosophy: Self and World (with Alison Simmons). Teaching Fellow.

Summer 2018: Race, Inequality, and Social Justice. Instructor (Harvard Summer School).

Fall 2018: Epistemology (with Selim Berker). Teaching Fellow.

Spring 2019: Happiness (with Susanna Rinard). Teaching Fellow.

Summer 2019: Race, Perception and Social Justice. Instructor (Harvard Summer School).

Spring 2020: Introduction to African American Studies (with Cornel West). Teaching Fellow.

Spring 2020: Reclaiming Argument: Logic as a Force for Good (with Ned Hall). Teaching Fellow.

Spring 2020: Chocolate, Culture, and the Politics of Food (with Carla Martin [African American Studies]). Teaching Fellow.

Summer 2020: Race, Perception, and Social Justice. Instructor (Harvard Summer School).

Spring 2021: Race in a Polarized America (with Jennifer Hochschild [Political Science]). Teaching Fellow.

Summer 2021: Rhyme, Reason, and Revolution: Hip Hop and Social Movements. Instructor (Harvard Summer School).

Peer-reviewed Publications:

“Political Action, Epistemic Detachment, and the Problem of White-mindedness”
forthcoming in Law and Epistemology volume of *Philosophical Issues*. (Fall, 2021)

Other Writing:

“What Kodak Black’s Recidivism Reflects about American Culture” *Blavity* (January 25, 2018)

“Dear Ye: An Open Letter to Rapper Kanye West from a Black Philosopher at Harvard,”
Blavity (May 4, 2018)

“The Guilt We Share: Hurricane Michael and Florida’s Unresolved Inequality,” *Blavity*
(October 19, 2018)

“Philosophizing in the Streets,” *Blog of the American Philosophical Association* (November 8, 2018)

“My Reflections on the Third Biennial World African Philosophy Conference” *Blavity*
(November 12, 2019)

“Beneath the Streets” *Boycott Times* (September 29, 2020)

Interviews:

“When the Philosopher Writes: A Conversation with Darien Pollock,” *Columbia Journal of Literary Criticism* (January, 2019)

Professional service:

Spring 2016: Lead organizer. Harvard/MIT Graduate conference. A one day conference where graduate students presented their work.

Fall 2018: Lead organizer. Belonging: the Challenges of Reentry. A one day conference that brought together academics, activists, legal practitioners, and returning citizens from across the country to talk about recidivism and felon reentry into society.

Summer 2019: Faculty facilitator. Summer of H.O.P.E. Institute. A week long forum sponsored by the Radcliffe Institute of Advanced Study, Boston Public Schools, and the Juvenile Alternative Resolution Program of the Suffolk County District Attorney’s Office, that provided system involved youth in the greater Boston area the opportunity to learn about the concepts of justice and injustice from a curriculum centered on socio-emotional learning and personal narrative.

Spring 2020: Manuscript review for the *South African Journal of Philosophy*.

Spring 2020: Lead organizer. Breaking the Chains Summit. A two day conference that brought together community stakeholders, activists, academics, artists, and elected officials to discuss policy implementation for Amendment IV, the public referendum that restored the voting rights for approximately 1.4 million felons in the state of Florida in the fall of 2018.

Awards:

Edmond J. Safra Center for Ethics Graduate Fellow (Spring 2020)

Harvard University Certificate of Distinction in Teaching (Spring 2019)

Highest Ranking Senior in the Department of Philosophy at Morehouse College (Spring 2015)

Rhodes Scholarship Finalist (Fall 2014)

Phi Beta Kappa (Spring 2014)

Long abstract: *Cultural Hegemony, Political Movements, and the Problem of Publicity*

My dissertation is about the relationship between public discourse, social groups, and political movements. The primary questions that I address in my thesis are: (1) how does social change happen in a political arrangement colored by cultural differences? And (2) why do members of a society's status quo fail to recognize certain non-institutional knowledge (i.e., "street knowledge") as legitimate epistemic resources?

A public sphere is a composite of various speaker communities who share different interests, values, and practices. Not surprisingly, this kind of diversity inevitably leads to the establishment of epistemic and linguistic hierarchies that dictate what kind of information and whose kind of experiences are "worthy" of being represented in mainstream discourse. No doubt, within a public sphere, things are *always* changing. The purpose of Chapter 1 is to diagnose the reason for change in a public sphere. On my view, the power dynamics of a particular public evolve because its mainstream discourse is constantly being contested by the hidden scripts that are derived from members of that public who have been marginalized by the status quo. Here, I depart from traditional accounts that conceive of publicity as primarily a relationship to the State (Habermas, 1989), mass communication (Lippman, 1922), and literary texts (Warner, 2002).

In Chapter 2, I deal with a conceptual tension that I believe obtains between linguistic hierarchies—what I call "semantic power structures"—and local linguistic authority, or the ability of a speaker community to encode a particular term, expression, or practice with meaning. My argument is that, for most non-scientific and non-moral terms, meanings are determined by the kind of usages that members of a speaker community see as important to their lived experiences. The main goal of this chapter is to challenge a prominent view in philosophy of language called "semantic deference" (Putnam, 1975) that claims that the meaning of a concept is determined by an individual or set of "expert" speakers that have linguistic authority within a speaker community.

What prevents us from acknowledging the hidden scripts of a social arrangement? This is the question that is at the heart of Chapter 3 of my thesis. I argue that, due to chattel slavery and colonization, a practical orientation emerged in most Westernized societies that structure the way we value any information, practices, and appearances that are not in accord with the European status quo. Beginning roughly around the late 16th century, the problem of white-mindedness, as I call it, becomes a way to label a set of issues surrounding the norms and incentives that contribute to anti-Black inclinations worldwide.

The last chapter of my dissertation sheds light on how a particular node within the white-minded problem-space played a role in subverting the goals of a real-world social justice movement. Florida's 2018 Felon Voting Rights movement was structured to enact social change from the "bottom-up." Despite involving members of the felon community in the promotion of their activism, I argue that the political opposition was able to undermine the felon voting rights legislation through "loophole capture." The organizations that spearheaded this movement developed a misleading account of the lived experience of felons in the state of Florida. I call this phenomenon "epistemic detachment."