

## [Roots at 40: Reflections and Remembrances](#)

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Type:

Call for Papers

Date:

October 6, 2017 to October 7, 2017

Location:

Connecticut, United States

Subject Fields:

African American History / Studies, American History / Studies, Cultural History / Studies, Human Rights, Popular Culture Studies

In the final week of January, 1977, the ABC miniseries *Roots* became the most-watched television program of all time. To the surprise of the show's producers, *Roots* became not only a ratings windfall, but a cultural phenomenon, articulating an African-American counter-narrative of American history, provoking a dialogue about the legacy of slavery, and presenting African-American characters with a dignity and integrity that differed sharply from the caricatured representations common to television up to that time. In many ways, the response to the show by the media and the general public constitutes the first of many "conversations about race" that have punctuated the Post-Civil Rights era.

On October 6 and 7 of 2017, Goodwin College will host a special conference to mark the 40th anniversary of the original broadcast of *Roots*. Goodwin College houses a significant repository of Alex Haley's writings, and it is committed to promoting dialogue about social justice and opportunity for all. We welcome 250-word proposals for conference presentations focused on any aspect of the miniseries, its impact, and its legacy.

Possible topics include but are not limited to:

- Media representations of slavery and African-Americans over the last half-century,
- The sociological and educational impacts of intergenerational trauma,
- Re-viewing *Roots* within the context of contemporary concerns such as the epidemic of mass-incarceration, the cultural heritage of the Civil War, the Black Lives Matter campaign, etc.,
- The power of television as both an agent of change and as upholder of the status quo,
- Generic interactions between oral history and novelistic fiction, and between historical iconography and televised melodrama,
- The history of attempts to have a public "conversation about race" and their ambiguous outcomes,
- Genealogy, naming, and African-American identity,
- Approaches to teaching the novel and the miniseries.

In addition to scholarly contributions, we also welcome artwork, creative writing, personal narratives, and multimedia reflections on *Roots* for inclusion in the conference program.

Please visit the conference website at the following address to submit your proposal:

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<https://networks.h-net.org/node/73374/announcements/142847/roots-40-reflections-and-remembrances>

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<http://digitalcommons.goodwin.edu/roots/>

Or send proposals directly to Randy Laist at [rlaist@goodwin.edu](mailto:rlaist@goodwin.edu).

Deadline for proposals: February 1, 2017

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