Beyond the Culture: Black Popular Culture and Social Justice

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Beyond the Culture: Black Popular Culture and Social Justice
Edited Volume Call for Papers

Editors: Lakeyta M. Bonnette-Bailey, Georgia State University, Department of Africana Studies
Jonathan Gayles, Georgia State University, Department of Africana Studies

In 2019, HBO studios released the controversial mini-series “Watchmen,” an innovative reimagining of the comic book series of the same name. This series was controversial for a number of reasons including a Black woman lead character and its setting in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Tulsa, Oklahoma was known as “Black Wall Street” because it was the epicenter of African-American economic prosperity. It was also the site of one of the deadliest examples of mass anti-Black racial violence in the United States. Within this limited series, the writers tackled the issues of racial discrimination as well as historical and present-day racial violence. Because the show featured the “Black Wall Street” massacre, there was an increased interest in Tulsa, Oklahoma and Black Wall Street in many major media outlets. This media focus on a historical event that has rarely garnered media attention demonstrates the role that popular culture, here a television series, could have on awareness of the continuing reality of white supremacy. Later in the year, HBO debuted “LoveCraft Country.” This series also addressed anti-Black racial violence and racism, the murder of Emmitt Till, the unwarranted and illegal exploitation of Black bodies for medical experiments, sundown towns, segregation, and the necessity of the Green Book that provided safe places for African-Americans to find lodging and food when traveling. Both series demonstrate the ways that popular culture
enhances collective understanding and engagement of historical realities that continue to the present – in particular, racial injustice.

_Beyond the Culture: Black Popular Culture and Social Justice_ is a seminal interdisciplinary text that examines the use of various genres of Black popular culture to engage diverse political, social and economic concerns. The goal of this volume is to document and analyze the numerous ways Black popular culture (television shows, music, movies, books, comic books and graphic novels) have discussed, promoted, and supported notions of social justice. In this edited volume, we argue that Black popular culture is more than merely entertainment. Our compilation offers detailed analyses of the relationship between Black popular culture and social justice. Specifically, this book details the ways Black popular culture not only “engenders empathy” but also increases awareness and empowers social justice.

Within the Black community, popular culture has always been a resource and resistance mechanism against oppression. Scholars such as Richard Iton (2008); Kinitra Brooks and Kameelah Martin (2019); Mark Anthony Neal (2002, 2013) and numerous others have discussed the importance and influence of Black popular culture. We have observed the ways that actors such as Paul Robeson, Lena Horne, Harry Belafonte, Laverne Cox and Kerry Washington have used and are using their celebrity positions to combat social injustices. Similarly, authors such as Octavia Butler (_Kindred and Parable series_), Ralph Ellison (_Invisible Man_), Toni Morrison (_Beloved, Song of Solomon_) and more recently Nic Stone (_Dear Martin_) and Angie Thomas (_The Hate You Give_) have dealt with the atrocities of slavery, policy brutality, racial violence, the Black Lives Matter Movement, lynching and racism within their fictional texts. _Beyond the Culture: Black Popular Culture and Social Justice_ will critically examine the use of Black popular culture as an agent for change. Specifically, this text will examine the ways in which artists, scholars and activists have engaged, discussed, promoted or supported social justice. Recently, various forms of popular culture have contributed to the fight for social justice whether on issues of criminal justice reform, racism, sexism, LGBTQIA rights, voting rights and human rights including both the Black Lives Matter and Me Too movements. This includes music, comic books literature, film, television programs and branding in shaping attitudes. Thus, because of its emphasis on Black popular culture and the interdisciplinary format of the book, readers will be intrigued by the analysis and the various ways Black popular culture has been utilized to fight oppression.
We hope that you are interested in contributing to this peer-reviewed volume. If so, please submit your abstract [here](https://networks.h-net.org/node/73374/announcements/7944812/beyond-culture-black-popular-culture-and-social-justice). The abstract should clearly identify your research question, thesis, methods of analysis, results, social justice issue addressed and the disciplinary home of the research, if any. Additionally, your abstracts should clearly identify the form of Black popular culture that will be examined. All abstracts are due August 31, 2021.

Tentative Submission Schedule:
Abstracts Due: August 31, 2021
Invitation to Submit Full Paper sent to Authors by September 15, 2021
Full Chapter Manuscripts Due: November 30, 2021
Revisions and Suggestions Sent to Contributors: January 7, 2022
Final, Revised Chapters Due: February 11, 2022

Sincerely, Lakeyta M. Bonnette-Bailey, Ph.D., and Jonathan Gayles, Ph.D., Georgia State University Ph.D.

Contact Info:
Lakeyta M. Bonnette-Bailey
Jonathan Gayles

Contact Email: lbonnette@gsu.edu; jgayles@gsu.edu