

[CFP: AAIHS 2016 Panel - Black Radicals and American Mass Culture](#)

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Type:

Call for Papers

Date:

November 1, 2015

Location:

North Carolina, United States

Subject Fields:

African American History / Studies, American History / Studies, Cultural History / Studies, Intellectual History, Popular Culture Studies

The African American Intellectual History Society (AAIHS)

University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

Conference Date: March 10-11, 2016

This proposed panel, entitled "Moving the Masses," seeks to explore the intersections of black radicalism and mass culture. It takes inspiration from recent "hashtag" social media protests--for instance, #BlackLivesMatter, #Ferguson, "DontShoot, and #ICantBreathe. Since 2012, young black activists, like Patrisse Cullors, Opal Tometi, and DeRay McKesson, have used the most ubiquitous of social media tools, including Twitter and Facebook, to create, as *The New York Times* described, a "model of the modern protester: part organizer, part citizen journalist who marches through American cities while texting, as charging cords and battery packs fall out of his pockets." Taking cues from the Arab Spring, African-American activists have utilized the broad networking potential of social media and the rapid dissemination of photos and videos of police abuse as a means to an end--to build a 21st-century movement for social justice.

Little scholarship examining the relationship between African Americans and mass culture has considered how black artists, writers, activists, and thinkers have harnessed the social, economic, and political power of the popular. When it comes to mass media in particular, historians still tend to treat African Americans as subjects rather than as architects. Even when the literature has examined African Americans as cultural actors and makers, it has done so largely through the lens of consumer capitalism and in terms of exploitation and expropriation. As historian Reebee Garofalo wrote in a 1990 essay on commercial music, "black roots, white fruits."

With more recent works by Jane Rhodes (*Framing the Black Panthers: The Spectacular Rise of a Black Power Icon*, 2007) and Leigh Raiford (*Imprisoned in a Luminous Glare: Photography and the African American Freedom Struggle*, 2011) as examples, scholars are invited to present new perspectives on African American Intellectual History that are grounded in studies of mass culture and that consider the varied implications of this relationship. Paper proposals might consider, for instance:

- Evangelism and popular religion

- Ritual, pageantry, and other types of public performance
- The common school movement
- The “grapevine telegraph”
- Investigative journalism and the muckraking press
- Highbrow / lowbrow theater
- Parks and public amusements
- World’s fairs
- Modern transportation
- Mass politics
- Radio broadcasting
- Film and filmmaking
- Sports, celebrity, and other forms of mass spectacle
- Pulp fiction, comics, memoir, and the popular novel
- Popular history
- The music industry
- The beauty industry
- Television
- Photography
- Broadcast news
- Comedy
- Social media

Please submit an abstract (250 words) and brief CV (1-2 pages), each as a Word doc attachment, to fviator@sfsu.edu no later than November 1, 2015. Feel free to email questions in the meantime.

If selected, participants must register for the AAIHS conference by February 1, 2016 (\$20 for AAIHS members; \$60 for non-members). For more information about the conference, contact aaivs10@gmail.com or visit the AAIHS website at www.aaihs.org

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