

curriculum vitae

# KRYSTAL A. SMALLS

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## EDUCATION

**University of Pennsylvania.** PhD in Africana Studies and Educational Linguistics (2015)

**Cornell University.** B.S. in Industrial and Labor Relations (2000)  
*Africana Studies Minor, Cornell National Scholar*

## ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

- 2017-Current     **University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign,** Assistant Professor  
Department of Anthropology (75%); Department of Linguistics (25%)
- 2015-2017       **University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign,** Postdoctoral Research Associate and Lecturer  
Department of Anthropology
- 2014-2015       **University of California, Santa Barbara,** Dissertation Fellow and Lecturer  
Department of Black Studies
- 2014              **University of Pennsylvania,** Instructor  
Graduate School of Education
- 2013-2014       **Arcadia University,** Adjunct Professor  
School of Education
- 2011-2014       **Philadelphia University,** Adjunct Professor  
College of Science, Health and Liberal Arts

## PUBLICATIONS

### *BOOKS:*

*Telling Blackness: Young Liberians, Anti-Blackness, and the Semiotics of Contemporary Diaspora,* Oxford University Press  
(incomplete work under contract)

### *REFEREED JOURNAL ARTICLES:*

"Fat, "Black, and Ugly: The Semiotic Production of Prodigious Femininities." *Transforming Anthropology* (In press)

"Fighting Words: Antiblackness and Discursive Violence in an American High School." *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 28, No 3 (2018): 356-383.

"We had lighter tongues': Making and mediating Gullah/Geechee personhood in the South Carolina Lowcountry," *Language and Communication* 32, no. 20 (2012): 147-159.

"Flipping the Script: (Re)constructing Personhood through Hip Hop Languageing in a U.S. High School," *Working Papers in Educational Linguistics* 25, no. 2 (2010): 35-54.

### *BOOK CHAPTERS:*

"Race, Signs, and the Body: Towards a Theory of Racial Semiotics" in the *Oxford Handbook of Language and Race*, edited by H. Samy Alim, Paul Kroskrity, and Angela Reyes. Oxford University Press. (In press).

"Languages of Liberation: Making Black Lives Matter Through Digital Discourse" In *Language and Social Justice: Case Studies on Communication and the Creation of Just Societies*, edited by Netta Avineri, Robin Conley Riner, Laura Graham, Eric Johnson, and Jonathan Rosa. Routledge. (2018): 52-60.

"Racialized Masculinity in Digital Space" in *Gender: Space*, edited by Aimee Meredith Cox. Macmillan Reference USA, (2018): 301-315.

"The Proverbial Monkey on Our Backs: Exploring the Politics of Belonging among Transnational African High School Students in the US." In *US Education in a World of Migration*, edited by Jill Koyama and Mathangi Subramanian, New York: Routledge, (2014): 19-37.

**BOOK REVIEWS:**

Review of *Real Black: Adventures in Racial Sincerity*, by John L. Jackson, *Transforming Anthropology* 21, no. 2 (2013): 205-207.

Review of *The Real Hip-hop: Battling for Knowledge, Power, and Respect in the LA Underground*, by Marcyliena Morgan, *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 22, no. 3 (2013): 247-250.

(with Catrice Barrett) Review of *Languages of Global Hip Hop*, edited by Marina Terkourafi, *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* 43, no. 4 (2012): 446-448.

**NON-ACADEMIC:**

"Daughters of the Dust and the Place of the Gullah/Geechee" *Public I* (April 2017). <http://publici.ucimc.org/daughters-of-the-dust-and-the-place-of-the-gullahgeechee/>

**FELLOWSHIPS & AWARDS**

2021	Humanities Research Institute Faculty Research Prize (University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign)
2021	Spotlighted in "Stars from the AAA Sections" in <i>Anthropology News</i>
2018-19	Illinois Program for Research in the Humanities Faculty Fellow (University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign)
2014	Black Studies Dissertation Fellowship (University of California, Santa Barbara)
2013	Honorable Mention, Ford Foundation Dissertation Fellowship
2012	University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology Summer Research Grant
2008-2013	William D. Fontaine Fellowship (University of Pennsylvania)
2008-2012	Carmen T. Middleberg Fellowship (University of Pennsylvania)
2009	Stephen Peck Award (Society for Pidgin and Creole Linguistics)
1996-2000	Cornell National Scholar (Cornell University)

**INVITED TALKS**

Apr 2021	"Digital Body-Snatching: TikTok, Utilitarian Anti-Blackness, and the Entextualization of the Black Body in Social Media" <b>Brandeis University, Department of Anthropology</b>
Apr 2021	"From Dispossession to Overdetermination: A Contemporary Racial Semiotics" w/ Jonathan Rosa. <b>Stanford University, Department of Anthropology.</b>
Apr 2021	"Water in Our Veins: A Reflection on Saltwater Ontologies of the Gullah/Geechee." <b>Indiana University, Diverse Environmentalisms Research Team</b>
Apr 2021	"Digital Body Snatching: Tiktok, Utilitarian Anti-Blackness, and the Entextualization of the Feminine Black Body in Social Media" <b>University of Arizona, Department of Anthropology</b>
Nov 2020	Discussant for "Alt-Signaling: White Violence, Military Fantasies, and Racial Stock in Trump's America" by Janet McIntosh and Norma Mendoza-Denton, <b>University of Chicago and University of Colorado-Boulder, Talking Politics: Anthropologists and Linguists Analyze the 2020 Election</b>
Nov 2020	"Utilitarian Anti-Blackness: Body-Snatching, White Pleasure, and the Entextualization of the Black Body in Digital Space." <b>University of Texas - Austin, Department of Anthropology</b>
Oct 2020	"Utilitarian Anti-Blackness: Body-Snatching, White Pleasure, and the Entextualization of the Black Body in Digital Space." Discourse Lab. <b>University of California -Los Angeles, Department of Linguistics</b>
Oct 2020	"Utilitarian Anti-Blackness: Body-Snatching, White Pleasure, and the Entextualization of the Black Body in Digital Space." Colloquium Series <i>White Supremacy and the Making of the Modern World</i> <b>University of Pennsylvania, Department of Anthropology</b>
May 2020	"Utilitarian Antiblackness: Body-Snatching in Digital Space" Semiotics: Culture in Context Workshop. <b>University of Chicago, Department of Anthropology</b>
Sep 2019	"Real Black: Emphatically Black Signs and Fugitive Humanity in Digital Space." Roman Jakobson Symposium. <b>Harvard University, Department of Anthropology</b>
May 2019	"White Noise: The Semiotics of Intentional Whiteness & Epistemic Resistance in Digital Space." Northwestern Anthropology Colloquium Series. <b>Northwestern University, Department of Anthropology</b>
Mar 2019	"White Noise: Cancelled Whiteness, Emphatic Blackness, and the Semiotics of Epistemic Resistance in Digital Life." Plenary Panel. <b>Ethnographic Futures Conference</b> , American Ethnological Society – St. Louis, MO
Feb 2019	"Diaspora Now: Young Liberians and the Semiotics of Transnational Blackness." Linguistics Colloquium Series. <b>Southern Illinois University-Carbondale, Department of Linguistics.</b>

**CAMPUS TALKS**

- Apr 2020 "Digital Body Snatching: Tiktok, Utilitarian Anti-Blackness, and the Entextualization of the Feminine Black Body in Social Media" Let's Talk Research Brown Bag Series  
**Department of African American Studies**, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign
- Apr 2019 "Tweet Nation: Studying Language, Race, and Identity in the Era of Trump" Sociolinguistics Symposium at the **Illinois Language and Linguistics Society Annual Conference**. University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.
- Apr 2018 "Ain't No Stopping Us Now:" Reflections on a Musical Journey through Collaborative Diaspora and African Infinity" Keynote Speaker: Re-Affirming Our Value: Africa's Contributions to the World  
**African Student Organization Annual Spring Forum**, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign
- Feb 2018 "Digital Diaspora and Blackness," Black History Month & Beyond Brown Bag Series  
**Department of African American Studies**, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign
- Apr 2017 "Familiar Strangers: Belonging and Dissonance in Contemporary African Diaspora"  
Invited Speaker: Africa: Next Generation of Leadership for Tomorrow's Change, Growth and Innovation  
**African Student Organization Annual Spring Forum**, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign
- May 2015 "Exploring the Semiotics of Digital Personhood: Emphatic Blackness in Selfies and Memes"  
**Language, Interaction, and Social Organization (LISO)**, University of California, Santa Barbara

**CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS**

- 2020 Panelist on "Teaching in Times of Crisis and Hope: A Roundtable Discussion on Language and Social Justice in the Classroom" **Society for Linguistic Anthropology Fall Conference 2020**, Boulder, CO (Postponed)
- 2019 "The "Black Body" in Digital Space: Digital Utterances and Anti-Black Epistemes" Panel: Semiotic Pathways to Social Justice: Theory, Technology, and Transformation **American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting**, Vancouver, Canada
- 2019 "The Pot and the Kettle: The Politics of Skin Color in Early Liberia" Panel: Marking the Skin, Past and Present  
**Association for the Study of the Worldwide African Diaspora**, Williamsburg, VA
- 2019 "The Water: Examining the Meanings of Saltwater in the Making of Gullah Past, Present, and Futures"  
**International Gullah Geechee and African Diaspora Conference**, Myrtle Beach, SC
- 2018 "The Future is Black: Transnational Liberian Youth and the Making of Black Modernities" **Liberian Studies Association (LSA) Annual Conference**, University of Rochester
- 2017 "Very Black and Very Human: Signifying in Digital Space" Panel: Language, Race, and Digital Space **American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting, Washington DC**
- 2017 Panelist for Society for Linguistic Anthropology Presidential Conversation: Mentoring and Social Justice  
**American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting**, Washington DC
- 2017 "#BlackHumanity: Digital Space as a New Terrain of Black Resistance" Panel: Re-envisioning Social Spaces of Resistance and Collective Identities in the African Diaspora **Association for the Study of the Worldwide African Diaspora**, Sevilla, Spain
- 2016 "Black and Multilingual: Language Education Scholarship and Black Students" Panel: Society for Linguistic Anthropology Presidential Conversation on Multilingual Education & Social Justice **American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting (Society of Linguistic Anthropology)**, Minneapolis, MN
- 2016 "Black Semiosis: Theorizing Black "Ways of Speaking" As Survival Codes" Panel: (Organizer) Talkin' and Testifyin' to Black Humanity: Producing Black Linguistic Anthropology Then and Now **American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting (Association of Black Anthropologists)**, Minneapolis, MN
- 2016 "Discourses of Black Unintelligibility" Panel: Toward a Raciolinguistic Perspective on the Study of Language and Society **Sociolinguistics Symposium 21**, Murcia, Spain
- 2015 "Mediatizing Anti-Anti-Blackness: Emphatic Blackness and Conscious "Unrespectability" in the Digital Sociality of Young Transnational Liberians" Panel: Transnational Processes of Mediatization Within a Digital Moment **American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting (Society of Linguistic Anthropology)**, Denver, CO

2015 “Geechee Gyals: “Femixing” the Dirty South and Annexing Caribbean Femininities in Diasporic Self-Making” Panel: Taking Her Place: The Spatial Politics of Black Womanhood **Association for the Study of the Worldwide African Diaspora**, Charleston, SC

2014 “Real Niggas and Authentic Africans: Semiotic Productions of Blackness and Belonging in the New Liberian Diaspora” Panel: Citizenship Otherwise: More Lessons from the Savage Slot **American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting (Association of Black Anthropologists)**, Washington, DC

2013 “Savages/Settlers/Slaves: Mashing Up Black Subjectivities in Liberia and the Metropole” Panel: Black Mirrors: Emergent Ethnoracial Configurations and Afro-indigenous Futures **American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting (Association of Black Anthropologists)**, Chicago, IL

2013 (with Diana Burnett) “Wading in the Waters: Black Immortality, Memory, and Transnational Black Intersubjectivity” Panel: Leaning Towards An Afrofuture: Black Thought and Aesthetics as Praxis **Critical Ethnic Studies Association Annual Meeting**, Chicago, IL

2013 (with Chike McLoyd) “New Visions: Black-Identified Transnational Youth Theorizing about Race and Justice” Panel: Epistemic Privilege and Poverty: Conceptualizing Transnational Youth as Social Theorists **American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting**, San Francisco, CA.

2012 “Fighting Monkeys and Situating Selves: Mapping Shiny New Blacknesses Via Dirty Old Logics In Contemporary Black Diaspora” Panel: Mapping Diasporic Engagements/Mapping Blackness **American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting (Association of Black Anthropologists)**, San Francisco, CA

2011 “Sheng Nation: Constructing Sheng Diaspora and Transforming Language Ideology Online” Panel: Tracing Mobile Language Practices Across Digital Territories. **American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting (Society of Linguistic Anthropology)**, Montreal, Canada

2011 “Sheng Nation: Transforming Ideology and Constructing Sheng Literacy Online” **Georgetown University Round Table on Language and Linguistics**, Washington DC

2011 “Flipping the Performative Script: (Re)Constructing Models of Identity Through Hip Hop Languageing and Liberian Englishes in a US High School” **Society of Pidgin and Creole Linguistics (at the Linguistic Society of America Annual Meeting)**, Pittsburgh, PA.

2010 (with Chike McLoyd) “It’s Bigger than Hip Hop: Translocal African Youth and Identity in the United States” Panel: Mobilizing Media: Constructing Social Identities in Youth Diaspora. **American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting (Society for Urban, National and Transnational/Global Anthropology)**, New Orleans, LA

2010 “The Signifyin’ Monkey and Lil Wayne: Co-Constructing Models of Identity Through Hip Hop Languageing in a US High School” **Multilingualism and Education: Global Practices, Challenges and the Way Forward Conference**, Kenyatta University- Nairobi, Kenya

2010 “You Don’t Know Me: Self-Conceptualization and Social-Identification Among African Immigrant High School Students” Panel: Politics of Identity Among Immigrant Students. **31<sup>st</sup> Annual Ethnography in Education Research Forum**, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA

2009 “Lighter Tongues: A Look at Gullah Language Ideology in Two Historic Schools” **Society for Pidgin and Creole Linguistics** and Associação de Crioulos de Base Lexical Portuguesa e Espanhola (ACBPLE), Köln, Germany

2009 “We Had Lighter Tongues: Language Teaching and Self-conceptualization in Two Gullah Communities” Panel: Tongue-Tied Territories and the End(s) of Nationhood: Language Purism and Language Politics in Stateless Nations **American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting** Philadelphia, PA

#### **PROFESSIONAL SERVICE**

**Member of the Wenner Gren Foundation Panel of Reviewers, 2020-2022**  
Wenner Gren Foundation

**Member of the Steering Committee for the Society for Linguistic Anthropology 2020 Fall Conference, 2020**  
American Anthropological Association

**Member of the Advisory Committee for the Center for African Studies, 2019-2020**  
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

**Member of Society for Linguistic Anthropology Committee on Language & Social Justice, 2015 – present**  
American Anthropological Association

**Chair, Committee on Minority Issues in Anthropology, 2017**  
American Anthropological Association

**Member, Committee on Minority Issues in Anthropology, 2013 – 2017**  
American Anthropological Association

#### **EDITORIAL ACTIVITIES**

**Co-Editor (w/ Arthur Spears and Jonathan Rosa), Special Issue on Language and White Supremacy, 2020**  
*Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*

**Editorial Board Member, 2020 -2024**  
*American Anthropologist*

**Editorial Board Member, 2019-present**  
*Journal of Language, Identity, and Education*

**External Reviewer, 2014 – present**  
*American Anthropologist; Journal of Linguistic Anthropology; Signs and Society; Meridians; Anthropology and Education Quarterly; Working Papers in Educational Linguistics*

**Editorial Team Member, 2008 – 2012; 2017 – 2018**  
*Anthropology and Education Quarterly*

**Co-Editor-in-Chief, 2010 – 2011**  
*Working Papers in Educational Linguistics*

#### **SELECTED SERVICE TO COMMUNITY**

- Member of Abolition 2 Abundance
- Founding Member of Mass Arrest Mutual Aid Champaign County
- Organizer and facilitator, youth worker and teacher training, Monrovia, Liberia
- Member of Sanctuary for the People at University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign
- Panel member *Daughters of the Dust* at the Affirmation & Resistance: Black World Film Series, Art Theater Co-op
- Panel member *Black Girl* at the Affirmation & Resistance: Black World Film Series, Art Theater Co-op,
- Public lecture for “Science for All” at Orpheum Children’s Science Museum
- Facilitator, youth worker and teacher trainings, Philadelphia, PA
- Volunteer program director, Ifetayo Cultural Arts Academy, Brooklyn, NY

#### **OTHER RESEARCH EXPERIENCE**

**Research Assistant/Ethnographer, 2009 – 2014**  
Project: The New Latino Diaspora in Marshall (Stanton Wortham)

**Research Assistant/Ethnographer, 2008 – 2012**  
Project: Communicative Repertoires and Mass Media (Betsy Rymes)

#### **OTHER ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE**

**Event Coordinator, April 17-18, 2014 - “Diaspora Circuits Reconsidered: Bringing Together the Post-colonial “New World” and Post-apartheid South Africa”, University of Pennsylvania**

**Event Coordinator, 2012 - Nessa Wolfson Colloquium, University of Pennsylvania**

**Program Co-Coordinator, 2009 – 2010 - Educational Linguistics Forum, University of Pennsylvania**

**Graduate Fellow and Mentor, 2009 – 2012 - Center for Africana Studies Summer Institute, University of Pennsylvania**

**Alumni Ambassador, 2008 – Present – Cornell University**

#### **PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS**

Society for Linguistic Anthropology, American Anthropological Association, Association of Black Anthropologists, Association for the Study of the Worldwide African Diaspora, Society for Pidgin & Creole Linguistics, Linguistic Society of America, American Education Research Association, Liberian Studies Association, Caribbean Studies Association

**LANGUAGE VARIETIES****Spanish:** moderate proficiency**Gullah/Geechee:** moderate proficiency**African American Language:** fluent**Kiswahili:** novice**COMMUNITY & POLICY WORK****Classroom Teacher,** Tenth Grade English (Special Education); Henrico County, VA, 2007-2008**Program Director,** Ifetayo Cultural Arts Academy; Brooklyn, New York, 2006-2007**Outreach & Communications Assistant,** The Parent-Child Home Program; Port Washington, NY, 2003-2006**Legislative Assistant,** Education/Social Services: US Congress, Rep. José E. Serrano (NY16); Washington, D.C., 2001-2003