

UHD

Center for
Critical Race Studies

presents

THE CONNECT

WELCOME

FELICIA L. HARRIS, PH.D.
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF THE CENTER FOR CRITICAL RACE STUDIES
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF COMMUNICATION STUDIES

The **Center for Critical Race Studies** at the University of Houston-Downtown works towards social justice by producing knowledge to transform lives and empower communities. Intrinsic to our mission is our goal of producing scholar-citizens who are equipped to understand and engage the intersectional challenges of the 21st century.

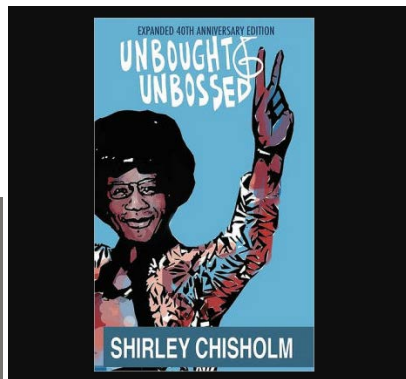
Today, our mission is as important as ever, but perhaps feels a bit more urgent. As we reel from the consequences of an unprecedented global health crisis we must remember that although we are physically distant, our social ties must remain connected and interdependent. In this inaugural issue of **The Connect**, we offer encouragement and resources for the important work that must continue while we all stay at home, yet connected to the communities and action that bring us together.



LISTENING

"When it's time to turn off the news and decompress, I enjoy popping in to "**Club Quarantine**," DJ D-Nice's recurring music sets on Instagram Live. During one live event, guests such as Oprah, Michelle Obama, Will Smith, and Joe Biden joined the party. His feel-good playlists and uplifting presence offer a much-needed distraction from current events and an opportunity to connect, sing, and dance with our global community when we need it most."

ANTOINETTE WILSON, PH.D.
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF
PSYCHOLOGY



READING

"Like most working mothers, my separate spaces of work and home have now crashed into one. When I have the privilege of quiet time, I am reading Shirley Chisholm's **Unbought and Unbossed** for inspiration and strength."

CRYSTAL GUILLORY, M.A.
ASSISTANT DEAN OF COLLEGE OF
HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL
SCIENCES



WATCHING

"Staying at home has provided me time to finish watching the provocative Netflix documentary, "**Who Killed Malcolm X?**" Besides delving deeply into the assassination of Malcolm X, this documentary reminds viewers of the significance of Malcolm's voice, perspective, and life to the struggle for freedom and justice in America."

JONATHAN CHISM, PH.D.
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF
HISTORY



CCRS Fellows, Feb 2020

A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

VIDA ROBERTSON, PH.D.

DIRECTOR OF THE CENTER FOR CRITICAL RACE STUDIES
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH AND HUMANITIES

While we have been forced to mask our faces in response to the invisible and ubiquitous threat surrounding us, the COVID-19 pandemic has unmasked the historic and disproportionate vulnerabilities of marginalized communities.

The inauguration of this virus beckoned the nation to focus on the fragility of elderly White Americans, yet recent reports indicate that the most profound devastation is occurring in impoverished communities of African Americans and Latinos. Once again, our legacy of White supremacy obscures the intersectional economic and institutional forces that continue to terrorize people of color. This interlocking system is ironically displayed in the hesitation of African American and Latino individuals to mask their faces in public in order to avoid an *invisible*, menacing virus with consequences they imagine pale in comparison to the psychological terror of being accidentally profiled by *visible*, and often menacing, law enforcement officers. Similar observations can be made of the swift accommodations made for middle-class workers to perform their jobs through sterilized masks of e-mail and Zoom meetings while overexposed working-class grocery store attendants are naked to the dangers of contracting the virus. The inescapable tragedy of such racial and economic dilemmas has claimed the jobs, bodies, and lives of the most vulnerable individuals of our society.

It is for this reason that we as a UHD community must continue to be mindful of the exacerbating effects of structures of oppression. COVID-19 is simply the newest incarnation of a very old issue in our nation. We must resolve to embrace, advocate, and empower. Each of us must embrace a more critical and intersectional understanding of our present circumstances. We must advocate for those most vulnerable to the oppressive forces that organize social systems and institutions. And, we must empower the most vulnerable among us. While I am deeply saddened by the suffering and loss of middle-class elderly, White Americans, it is the countless lives of people who are homeless, undocumented, disabled, psychologically traumatized, and transgender in urban centers who live on the margins of society that have been yet again masked by the media and our oversimplified considerations. The Center for Critical Race Studies encourages you to embrace them, advocate for them, and act on their behalf.

**YOU MAY NOT CONTROL ALL
THE EVENTS THAT HAPPEN TO
YOU, BUT YOU CAN DECIDE
NOT TO BE REDUCED BY THEM.**

MAYA ANGELOU

SELF-CARE IN UNCERTAIN TIMES

STACIE CRAFT DEFREITAS, PH.D.
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF PSYCHOLOGY

As the **Stay Home, Work Safe** order continues, many of you may understandably feel nervous about the future. Here are some tips to help you maintain your mental health.

How do you take care of small children? Remember children are observant and will take their cues from you. Watch for signs of anxiety in children, such as increased irritability, nightmares, and bed-wetting. If you see these signs, put forth extra effort to spend positive, one-on-one time in activities that these children enjoy. Check out these ideas:
<https://parade.com/1009774/stephanie-osmanski/things-to-do-with-kids-during-coronavirus-quarantine/>.

How do you support those less fortunate than yourself? First, stay at home as much as possible. This will help to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and save lives. It is the most important thing you can do right now. Also, consider donating money to the **Gator Emergency Fund**:
<https://www.uhd.edu/advancement/Pages/gator-emergency-fund.aspx>.
Students should go to the site to apply for emergency funding if in need.

How do you take care of yourself? Do something each day just for you. Decide what it will be in the morning so that you have something to look forward to during the day. Here are some ideas:
<https://tinybuddha.com/blog/45-simple-self-care-practices-for-a-healthy-mind-body-and-soul/>.

A STATEMENT OF SOLIDARITY

CCRS SEES YOU, WORKING-CLASS GATORS

CHUCK JACKSON, PH.D.
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH

Employment, work, labor, job, or hustle.

If you're a Gator, chances are you've got a gig. Likely two. Sometimes more. And more often than not, there are kids or elders or siblings to care for, too.

Cashier. Sales Assistant. Seasonal Sales Associate. Retail Manager.
Waitstaff. Food Prep. Cook. Catering. Bartender. Barista. Host.
Dishwasher. Busser. Drive-Thru Server.

UHD's Center for Critical Race Studies knows that lay-offs, furloughs, firings, and closings associated with the pandemic are hurting our students, our university wage-earners, and their families. As faculty and staff committed to the study of how economic class differences intersect with race, ethnicity, immigration status, ability, gender, sexuality, and other identity categories, CCRS recognizes that your struggle – yours – is real. More often than not, UHD students are working-class students. And, for working-class students, if there is no work, there is no being a student.

Lawn Care. Day Care. Construction. Teacher's Aide. Administrator. Bank Teller. Package Handler. Mail Services. Mechanic. Office Worker. Driver. Housekeeper. Janitor. Custodian. Customer Service Representative. IT Associate. Forklift Operator. Virtual Call Center Agent.

Some of the most important – most culturally and politically transformative – writers, artists, thinkers, and activists have done the work that you do, sharing your very same working-class identity.

Part Time. Full Time. Over Time. Morning Shift. Day Shift. Evening Shift. Graveyard. 12-hour Saturdays. 12-hour Sundays.

CCRS expresses solidarity with you. We see you. We live with the hopes of workers who keep our world working and who have forever changed our worlds, including you.



CCRS Fellows, April 2020

FELLOWS OF THE CENTER FOR CRITICAL RACE STUDIES

Dr. Kristin Anderson

Associate Professor of Psychology

Dr. Johnathan Chism

Assistant Professor of History

Dr. Sucheta Choudhuri

Associate Professor of English

Dr. Stacie DeFreitas

Associate Professor of Psychology

Dr. DoVeanna Fulton

*Dean, College of Humanities and
Social Sciences*

Dr. Felicia L. Harris

*Assistant Professor of
Communication Studies*

Dr. Chuck Jackson

Associate Professor of English

Dr. Creshema R. Murray

*Associate Professor of
Communication Studies*

Mr. Daniel Peña

Assistant Professor of English

Dr. Vida Robertson

*Associate Professor of English and
Humanities*

Dr. David Ryden

*Associate Dean, College of
Humanities and Social Sciences*

Dr. Doug teDuits

Assistant Professor of Management

Dr. Antoinette Wilson

Assistant Professor of Psychology

Let's Connect!

If you have resources, stories, or inspiration you would like to share with the CCRS community, please e-mail CCRS@uhd.edu.

