

# THE CONNECT

A Center for Critical Race Studies Newsletter



## CELEBRATING BLACK HISTORY MONTH AT UHD RECLAIMING OUR PAST, SHAPING OUR FUTURE

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This February, we celebrate another dynamic Black History Month at the University of Houston-Downtown. Black History Month acknowledges and honors past and ongoing contributions of Black Americans. To join in this recognition, UHD has an exciting schedule of events and panel discussions centered around the theme of **“Reclaiming our Past: Shaping our Future.”** As part of these celebrations, UHD had the distinct honor of welcoming notable figures to campus such as Lora King, daughter of Rodney King, activist, and CEO of the Rodney King Foundation, and Professor Nikole Hannah-Jones, acclaimed journalist, Pulitzer Prize winner, and author of *The 1619 Project: A New Origin Story*.

In SGA’s Black History Month kickoff event, “We Stand With You,” King powerfully discussed ways in which social justice activism can honor her father’s enduring legacy. During February’s Presidential Lecture Series, Hannah-Jones’ message focused on the importance of re-examining how our nation’s foundation continues to shape and define our society. Indeed, she encouraged us to consider and reflect on the ways in which Black Americans’ contributions to the foundation of the United States were and continue to be instrumental in upholding the ideals of democracy. These messages were particularly timely, needed, and impactful.

CCRS is particularly thrilled to present our Spring Fellow Spotlight featuring Dr. Felicia Harris. Dr. Harris will be in conversation with Dr. Jonathan Chism to discuss her new book entitled *First in the Family: Biblical Truths for Cycle Breakers*. In her book, she bravely explores overcoming obstacles in family relationships and she challenges perceptions of traditional conceptualizations of family. To learn more information about the Fellow Spotlight and additional Black History Month events planned throughout the month of February click [here](#).

## WORLD DAY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE IS FEB. 20TH

NINA BARBIERI, PH.D.  
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF  
CRIMINAL JUSTICE

**“THE CHALLENGE OF SOCIAL JUSTICE IS TO EVOKE A SENSE OF COMMUNITY THAT WE NEED TO MAKE OUR NATION A BETTER PLACE, JUST AS WE MAKE IT A SAFER PLACE.”**

**MARIAN WRIGHT EDELMAN**

On November 26, 2007, the United Nations General Assembly confirmed February 20th as the annual World Day of Social Justice. In the official resolution, they declare the need to reaffirm and recognize the importance of justice, equity, democracy, inclusion, and respect for all human rights within our nation and across the world. Furthermore, this is a commitment to ensuring social protections and equitable access to institutions such as healthcare and education, but also gainful employment and income opportunities.

**What is social justice?** Social justice means many things, including the equitable distribution of wealth, opportunities, and privileges within and across a society. Of additional importance is the removal of institutional barriers and the promotion of social mobility, or the ability for individuals to move “up” in social class. There are many ways you can become involved in your community on issues you are passionate about. If you are interested and looking for some ideas, consider the following:

- Research a specific issue or organization providing services related to: poverty, discrimination, education inequality, food insecurity, housing insecurity, immigration, protecting rights of indigenous people, human trafficking, or unsafe working conditions.
- Volunteer with or donate to one of these organizations.
- Contact a policy maker with suggestions for improvement or bringing their attention to an issue you have researched.
- Create your own action plan for how you can continually and regularly promote social justice.
- Talk with others about social justice—what it is and why it is important.
- Read [the UN's official resolution](#) on World Day of Social Justice.
- Learn more about [the United Nations](#).
- Commit to learning more!



## EMBRACE THE FUTURE OF FEMINISMS

### MULTIPLE FEMINISMS COMBAT GENDER & INTERSECTIONAL OPPRESSION

STALINA VILLARREAL, PH.D.  
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH

When individuals object to feminism, is it patriarchy, or is it a misconception of the definition of feminism? The concept of feminism is difficult to define because there are multiple feminisms. For example, First Wave Feminism sprouted with the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848, but the wave often gets remembered for the women's suffrage movement in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. It was a movement that included Black and Indigenous women who are often not given credit for their efforts.

Second Wave Feminism started in the 1960s and continued for a couple decades and centering on women's movements as well, such as reproductive rights. Once again, women of color were overshadowed even though many were active participants. Identity politics became part of some feminisms during this wave, as documented by the collected essays in the 1981 book *This Bridge Called My Back*, edited by Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa. Third Wave Feminism started in the 1990s and lasted a couple decades with the intention of being more inclusive of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation. We're currently amid Fourth Wave Feminism, which is still being developed. It encompasses the #MeToo movement, for instance, but it is not the only feminism existent. We have multiple feminisms.

As we shift from Black History Month in February to Women's History Month in March and International Women's Day on March 8, let us remember the words of Black feminist theorists. The critic bell hooks in her book *Outlaw Culture* argues that “the moment we are willing to give up our own ego and draw in the being and presence of someone else, we're no longer 'Othering' them . . .” In other words, this is a process to obliterate prejudice between two people. In “The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House,” poet and essayist Audre Lorde asserts a process for collective liberation:

***“Within the interdependence of mutual (nondominant) differences lies that security which enables us to descend into the chaos of knowledge and return with true visions of our future, along with the concomitant power to effect those changes which can bring that future into being. . . . Without community there is no liberation, only the most vulnerable and temporary armistice between an individual and her oppression.”***

Lorde was advocating for women with intersectionality. For equity, both Lorde and hooks give us strategies to combat gender and intersectional oppression. Consequently, feminisms may not be easy processes, but a just outcome is worth embracing. It has been years since Lorde and hooks wrote these words, yet as we move forward, lineages of feminisms still ring true as we strive for improvement.

We must disrupt sexism and embrace feminisms that empower marginalized women so that we find an equilibrium. Enacting awareness, calling out injustices, stopping injustices, and supporting one another are all crucial. Thus, fostering feminisms are important for everyday living and our upcoming celebrations of women.



## A HOMETOWN SPRING BREAK

### AN ARRAY OF ADVENTURES AWAIT RIGHT HERE IN HOUSTON

SUCHETA CHOUDHURI, PH.D.

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH

Spring break is upon us. Well—almost. The thought of it, at least, is keeping us afloat. With travel no longer being what it was, it seems worth looking into what our city has to offer, and what we might be able to do from the comfort of our homes. We've compiled some suggestions for things to do over the break, ranging from plays to art exhibits and must-read books.

Like plays? Thought-provoking theatrical productions at the **Alley Theater** downtown (615 Texas Avenue) have long sustained the Houston community. Alley is now offering digital

rentals in addition to live stage performances. Look out for the world premiere of **Amerikin** (Dr. James Black), a play that exposes the ideology of white supremacy, the "us vs. them" binary that it relies on, and what might happen when the fluid boundary between these categories is destabilized.

Into art? Two art exhibits—one current, one upcoming—might resonate with you in different ways. Currently on view at **The Texas Asia Society** (1370 Southmore Blvd) is **Making Home: Artists and Immigration**. Through the works of artists Phung Huynh, Beili Liu, Tuan Andrew Nguyen, and Amanda Phingbodhipakkiya, the exhibit addresses immigrants' perception of home, family, memories, loss and intergenerational conflict. This multimodal exhibit includes paintings, prints, drawings, sculptures, and installations. Details on the exhibit can be found [here](#). **Dawoud Bey: An American Project** is a photography exhibit that opens at the **Museum of Fine Arts** (1001 Bissonet) on March 6. Dawoud Bey is a prominent name in the history of African American visual culture. Bey's interest in untold stories, marginalized histories and underrepresented communities is articulated through nocturnal landscapes and street photography of Harlem. For more on the exhibit, click [here](#).

If films are more up your alley, I would recommend the screenings of the Oscar-nominated shorts—animated, live action and documentary—at the **Museum of Fine Arts** through February and March. MFAH is also screening **Flee** (2021), a compelling animated docudrama by Jonas Poher Rasmussen, in which the protagonist shares his journey as a child refugee from Afghanistan. This genre-bending film has received three Oscar nominations for Best Animated Feature, Best Documentary Feature and Best International Feature Film. If you miss the MFAH screening, this must-watch film is also available to rent on several streaming platforms.

If you are looking for a stimulating read and wish to share your thoughts with other readers, try the **Inprint Book Club**, which is free and open to the public. The club will meet virtually on Sunday, March 20 to discuss **Chronicles from the Land of the Happiest People on Earth** (2021) by Wole Soyinka, the noted Nigerian playwright, poet, novelist, and political activist. At once a scathing political satire and a murder mystery, the novel has been praised by the critics as Soyinka's greatest literary achievement till date. I have two other book recommendations for you: Brit Bennett's **The Vanishing Half** (2021) and Cathy Park Hong's **Minor Feelings: An Asian American Reckoning** (2020). Hong's book of deeply personal essays examines the racialized experience of Asian-Americans, and Bennett's novel family saga is a searing exploration of the American history of racial passing.

Whatever you choose to do for Spring Break, the Fellows of the Center wish you a happy and safe time of rest and recalibration.

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#### 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](mailto:CCRS@uhd.edu).

