From Abolition to Black Lives Matter: Past and Present Forms of Transnational Black Resistance

October 26-28, 2017, Johannes Gutenberg-University, Mainz, Germany.
Conference organizers: Nele Sawallisch, Johanna Seibert, Pia Wiegmink, Frank Obenland

This conference hosted by the Transnational American Studies Institute aims at assessing and theorizing past and present forms of black intellectual, political, and cultural resistance from the era of abolitionist campaigns against the transatlantic slave trade to the recent global protest formation of Black Lives Matter.

Protests against racial discrimination, inequality, poverty, and injustice not only pervade (North) American history but span the globe and cross – oftentimes multiple – borders. Building on the recent transnational turn in American Studies and de-centering American Studies’ focus on the nation as the prime focus of analysis, this workshop invites papers that trace the Atlantic routes/roots (Gilroy), the diasporic and global trajectories, as well as the movement, circulation, and dissemination of past and present forms and ideas of black resistance. The conference aims at discussing the transnational dimension of various forms of resistance that are often embedded in larger social movements such as the anti-slavery, the anti-lynching, the Civil Rights, Black Power, Anti-Apartheid, the Global Justice, the Prison Abolition, or the Black Lives Matter movements.

Investigating the transatlantic significance of these movements, this conference will also address how collective or individual acts of resistance are articulated and represented in print, performance, visual art, or other media.

How do we conceptualize the connections between past and present forms of transnational black resistance? How does this relationship between the past and the present shape existing notions of resistance? How did national movements for black equality and justice impact as well as intersect with national and international forms of protest? How do forms of black resistance initiate ways to re-think forms of protest and activism outside the United States? How do protest movements intersect with scholarly and intellectual pursuits in academia? What role have different media played in and for black resistance movements throughout the centuries not only in national but also international contexts? How have the digital world and global social media changed previous forms of transnational black resistance? What could be possible trajectories of movements such as Black Lives Matter in the face of the 2016 Presidential election in the United States? How can scholars and activists collaborate in articulating critical interventions in ongoing political discussions?

Confirmed keynote speaker: Prof. Charmaine Nelson, Professor of Art History, McGill University, Montreal, Canada.

We invite contributions from all disciplines, e.g. history, literary and cultural studies, visual culture/art history, political science, sociology. Potential paper topics could include, but are not limited to:

- transnational routes of political/social activism and cultural resistance/protest cultures
- transnational black intellectual histories of racial equality and justice
- methodological and conceptual perspectives that bring together approaches from transnational American Studies with African American and Black Diaspora Studies
- intersectional approaches to the study of black resistance with regard to class, gender, age, nationality, religion, etc.
- the role of women in and for black resistance movements
- Black literatures of protest and resistance
- Black resistance and cultures of performance, transnational aesthetics of protest
- Black resistance and popular culture, Black resistance and global (social) media
• Intersection of popular resistance movements and academic interventions in political discourse

Please send your paper proposal (max. 300 words) and a short bio (150 words) by **January 31, 2017** to sawallis@uni-mainz.de