

Keith D. Leonard
Department of Literature
American University
4400 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington DC, 20016
kdl@american.edu

Education and Employment:

Employment: 1999-present, American University, Associate Professor

Education: Stanford University, Ph.D, 1999
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, MA, English, 1993
Yale University, BA, English, 1991

Administrative Positions:

Faculty Director, Frederick Douglass Distinguished Scholars Program,
8/2015-5/2019
Chair, Advisory Committee, Frederick Douglass Distinguished Scholars
Program, 8/2014-8/2015
Founding Director, African American and African Diaspora Studies
Program, 2017-2018
Department Chair, 6/2009-5/2012
Acting Chair: Summer 2008, Summer 2013
Director, Undergraduate Studies, Literature department, 6/2005-6/2009
Advisor, Minors in Multi-Ethnic Studies and African American and
African Diaspora Studies. 2006-2017

Refereed Publications:

Book:

Fettered Genius: The African American Bardic Poet from Slavery to Civil Rights.
Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006
Reviewed in: *Modernism/Modernity* 15(1); *African American Review*
42(3/4); *MELUS* 32(2) Summer 2007; *Journal of American Studies* (Aug
2007) vol. 41(2); *American Literature* 79 (3); *Choice* 44(2) (October
2006); *Research and Research Book News* 21.2 (May 2006)

Refereed Articles:

“Postmodern Soul: The Innovative Nostalgia of Thomas Sayers Ellis.”
Contemporary Literature vol. 56 no. 2 (Summer 2015): 340-371.
Winner: L.S. Dembo prize for best essay published in
Contemporary Literature in 2015

“Love in the Black Arts Movement: The Other American Exceptionalism”
Callaloo 36.3 (Summer 2013): 618-624.

“‘Which Me Will Survive’: Rethinking Identity, Reclaiming Audre Lorde.”
Callaloo 35.3 (Summer 2012): 758-777

“Yusef Komunyakaa’s Blues: The Postmodern Music of *Neon Vernacular*”
Callaloo 28.3 (Summer 2005): 825-849

Book Chapters and other essays:

“His Vagabond Heart: *Harlem Shadows* at 100.” *Poetry Foundation.org*
(<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/articles/157182/his-vagabond-heart>),
January 31, 2022

“The Society of Umbra and the Coming of the Black Aesthetic” *African American Literature in Transition: the 1960s*, Shelly Eversley, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022): 23-49.

“New Black Aesthetics: Post Civil-Rights African American Poetry” *Cambridge Companion to Twenty-First Century American Poetry*. Timothy Yu, ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2021): 17-30

“Blues” *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press (2012): 151-152.

“Margaret Esse Danner.” *Writers of the Black Chicago Renaissance*. Steven Tracy, ed. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011): 150-160.

“We Wear the Mask: The Making of An African American Poet” *Cambridge History of African American Literature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011): 209-219.

“Jazz in African American Literature” *Blackwell’s Companion to African American Literature* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010): 286-301.

“African American Women Poets and the Power of the Word.” *Cambridge Companion to African American Women’s Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009): 168-186.

“Harper, Michael S.” *The Oxford Companion to African American Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997): 343-4.

Edited Volumes:

The Cambridge History of African American Poetry (in progress)

“Furious Flower Special Issue” *Obsidian* 41.2 Fall 2015

“Verse Center: A Special Issue on Multi-Ethnic Poetics” *Melus* 35.2 June 2010

“The Next Thirty: The Future of African American Studies” *Callaloo* 30.4 March 2008

Reviews:

Review of *The African American Sonnet: A Literary History*, by Timo Müller in *The ALH Online Review Series XXI* (1-23-2020)

<https://academic.oup.com/alh/pages/the-alh-online-review-series-21>

Fields Watered With Blood: Critical Essays on Margaret Walker: A Review," in *American Literary History Online* (Gordon Hutner, ed.) (January 2016)

http://oxfordjournals.org/our_journals/alhist/alhreview_series5.html?src=homepage

Foreward to *The Fateful Appel* by Venus Thrash (Urban poets & lyricists, March 9, 2014)

Review of *The Souls of Mixed Folk: Race, Politics, and Aesthetics in the New Millennium* by Michelle Elam, *The Postwar African American Novel: Protest and Discontent, 1945-1950* by Stephanie Brown, and *If We Must Die: From Bigger Thomas to Biggie Smalls* by Aimé J. Ellis. *American Literature* vol. 84 no. 4 (December 2012):

Review of *Skin, Inc: Identity Repair Poems* by Thomas Sayers Ellis *Callaloo* vol. 34 no. 3 (Summer 2011): 964-966.

“By Any Other Name” (review of Yu, Timothy. *Race and the Avant Garde: Experimentalism and Asian American Poetry Since 1965*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009) in *Twentieth Century Literature* (Fall 2010)

Every Goodbye Ain't Gone: An Anthology of Innovative Poetry by African Americans. Aldon Lynn Nielsen and Lauri Ramey. Tuscaloosa: U. of Alabama Press, 2006. 328 pages

Race and Time: American Women's Poetics from Antislavery to Racial Modernity: A Review” *Legacy* 22.1 (2005): 81-83

“*Songlines in Michaeltree: New And Selected Poems* by Michael Harper: A Review” *African American Review* 36.2 (Summer 2002)

“Hitting A Straight Lick With a Crooked Stick: Gender in the Work of Zora Neale Hurston: A Review” Legacy 18(2) Fall 2001

Media

The Bob Edwards Show, SIRIUS XM Radio, August 27, 2013

Contribution to Poetry Foundation podcast on the career of Langston Hughes.

<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/audio/PoetryFoundation.orgPodcast2.19.07.mp3>

February 19, 2007

Presentations:

Invited:

[“The Public Life of African American Poets”](#) at the Arlington, Va Public Library, April 29, 2021

“An Avant-Garde Thing’: Blackness, Innovation, Resistance” at the Howard University Graduate English Students Association Conference, March 26, 2021

“Touching Dark Matter: Afrofuturism’s Body of Knowledge” at the History Seminar on Contemporary Science, Technology, and Culture, the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum, October 17, 2019

“Black Is...An’ Black Ain’t’: Twenty-First Century African American Poetics” at Duquesne University, October 3, 2018

“Experimental Blackness” at Theorizing Black Literature Now Conference at Rutgers University, February 12, 2016

"Blackness as Form, Blackness as Innovation," as Visiting Faculty at an NEH Institute, Don't Deny My Voice, National Endowment for the Humanities, University of Kansas. Scope: National. Refereed. (July 29, 2015)

“Who Stole the Soul?” Celebrating African American Literature: African American and Caribbean Poetry and Poetics, October 25-26, 2013

Callaloo Annual Conference, October 11-13, 2012: “Love in the Black Arts Movement: The Other American Exceptionalism”

“Rethinking Post-Black”

Texas Institute on Literary and Textual Studies Symposium, September 14, 15
2011

“The Intimacy of Innovation: Writing Community in Post-Soul Poetry” lecture at Penn State University, March 24, 2010

“Perseverance and Progress: Teaching Cultural Competence through Black History,” panelist at E. L. Haynes Public Charter School, January 14, 2009

“Tupac: Resurrection” for National Portrait Gallery

“Mobilizing the Jazz Age: The Great Gatsby and “The New Negro” for the “Wisdom Wednesday Program” “The Big Read” sponsored by The National Endowment for the Arts, May 21, 2008.

“Hip-Hop Poetics” at George Washington University, April 28, 2003

“Hip-Hop Poetics” at Diversity Day, Packer Collegiate, Brooklyn NY. February 26, 2003

“Manhood, Selfhood and Literacy: The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave.” Stanford “Cultures, Ideas and Values” course: April 28, 1998

Refereed Conferences:

“Natasha Trethewey’s Ruthless Memory” at the American Literature Association Conference, May 27, 2023

“‘An Ethiop Tells You’: Phyllis Wheatley as Muse” at the College Language Association Conference, April 7 2023

“Black Avant-Gardism” for Panel on “Race, Ethnicity, and U.S. Poetry” at the Modern Language Association, January 6, 2016

“Who Stole the Soul?: An Avant-Garde History of the Dark Room Collective” at the American Studies Association Conference, November 6-9, 2014.

“Ruthless Memory in Natasha Trethewey’s *Thrall* and *Native Guard*” and “An Avant-Garde History of the Dark Room Collective” at the Furious Flower Conference, September 24-27, 2014

Organized the Panel “Innovative Nostalgia” for American Literature Association, presented the paper “For the Love of Chocolate City: Thomas Sayers Ellis’s Post-Soul Black Aesthetic”; May 24-27 2012

Post-Soul Poetics: Possibilities and Problems” American Literature Association Conference, May 27-30, 2010

"Possessed of Nothing': The Liberating Limits of the Blues in the Poetry of Sterling Plumpp" at the American Literature Association Conference, May 24-27, 2007

"A Woman's Work: African Spirituality as Liberating Labor In Audre Lorde's Black Unicorn" at the Society for the Study of Multi-Ethnic Literatures of the United States Conference, March 22-25 2007

"The Story': Uniting Experience, History and Community in Lucille Clifton's Quilting" at the Furious Flower Conference, September 2004.

"The Woman Thing': Audre Lorde's Black Aesthetic" at the Modern Language Association Conference, December 2003

"Scoping the Soundscape of Contemporary African American Poetry," workshop at Hawaii International Conference on the Humanities, January 12-15, 2003

"Trouble in Paradise: Zora Neale Hurston's Radical Individualism" at CLA at MLA, December 2002

"To Reach the Rest of Me': Unifying the Self Through Sight and Sound in the Poetry of Saul Williams" at the George Moses Horton Society for the Study of African American Poetry, April 13, 2002

"An Ethiop Speaks': Phillis Wheatley's American Identity" at the College Language Association Conference, April 25, 2002

"Modernism, Nationalism and the Imagination: Gwendolyn Brooks' Vision of Art and Liberation in In the Mecca" at the American Literature Association Conference, May 25-28 2000.

"Fleshing His Dream: History, Symbolism and Spirituality in *Angle of Ascent.*" at the American Literature Association Conference, May, 1999

"Representing the Race: Identity and Race-Consciousness in 20th Century African American Poetics," African And Afro-American Studies Fall '98 Lecture Series(AAAS101A): December 4, 1998

"Facing It': The Poetry of Yusef Komunyakaa." George Moses Horton Society for the Study of African American Poetry Conference: April 3-5, 1998

"Writing Poetry, Writing Difference: African American Formalist Poetics, 1919-1967." Stanford Humanities Center Lecture: February 5, 1998.

“Melvin Tolson's Rattling of Eliotic Bones: Black Culture, New Art, and the Transformation of the Word.” National Poetry Foundation Conference: April, 1996

“The Dilemma of Black Difference: Zora Neale Hurston and the Canon.” National Association of African American Studies Conference: February, 1996

Honors / Awards:

American Council of Learned Societies Fellowship, AY 2019-2020 (\$50,000)
CAS Dean's Award (American University) for Outstanding Contributions to an
Inclusive Community (April 2017)
L.S. Dembo prize for best essay published in *Contemporary Literature* in 2015
Distinguished Faculty Award, Office of Multicultural Affairs, (April 2007)
Mellon Fellowship, \$2000 for research in Paris about African American
expatriate artists
Mellon Fellowship \$2000 for copyright fees (Spring 2005)

Professional Service:

Judge, Poetry Out Loud
Judge, Hurston/Wright Foundation Non-Fiction book prize (April 2009)
Proposal review for the Ford Foundation (March 2009)
Proposal review for the National Endowment for the Humanities (Jan. 2004)

Memberships: Modern Language Association

Modern Language Association
African American Literature and Culture Society
American Studies Association
College Language Association