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## Contributors

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### Cassandra D. Chaney



Cassandra D. Chaney, Ph.D. is a Professor in Child and Family Studies at Louisiana State University (LSU). Dr. Chaney is broadly interested in the dynamics of African-American family life, yet under this umbrella are several primary areas. For one, Dr. Chaney examines the narratives of African-Americans in dating, cohabiting, and married relationships, with a particular interest in relationship formation, maintenance, and stability. Furthermore, Dr. Chaney explores the ways that religiosity and spirituality support African-Americans. In addition, Dr. Chaney examines the representation of African-American couples and families (e.g., structural and functional dynamics) in popular forms of mass media (i.e., television shows, movies, music videos, and song lyrics). Given the increasing number of African Americans that murdered by members of law enforcement, her work critically examines how racism demonstrates and solidifies via individuals and institutions in America. Given the unique socio-historical challenges of Black families, her research provides recommendations regarding how policy can better meet the needs of Black families who experience heightened rates of incarceration, unemployment, weakened family structures, and racism. Most important, her scholarship roots in a strengths-based perspective and emphasizes the various ways that Black families remain resilient in the face of these challenges. In addition to publishing over 80 manuscripts in various journals in the United States and abroad, she has also presented her research during many local, state, and national conferences. She has received invitations to contribute chapters for over 10 book volumes relating to the topics of African American community sentiment regarding marriage, marriage promotion, strong Black marriages, and the racial experiences of Black professors at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs). She is an Associate Editor with the *Journal of Hip Hop Studies* (JHHS), and is on the editorial boards of *Family Relations*, *International Journal of Crisis Journalism*, the Editorial Manager of *PLOS One*, and is Review Board Member of *Social Work Online*. She published the co-edited the book *Black Women in Leadership: Their Historical and Contemporary Contributions* with Dr. Dannielle Joy Davis (Peter Lang Publishers) which explores the leadership experiences of Black women within macro

level (such as education, industry, and social services) and micro level (such as family and individual churches) contexts. This interdisciplinary work examines leadership practices, highlighting the historical and current triumphs and barriers of Black women in these roles. Currently, Dr. Chaney is writing two co-authored books related to the characteristics of strong Black marriages and community perceptions of law enforcement.

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### **Oana Alexandra Chirilă**

Oana Alexandra Chirilă is a Ph.D. Student in Literary and Cultural Studies at the University of Bucharest. Her research focuses on intoxicants in Islam, mainly seen through the lens of literature. She has published several articles and participated in numerous conferences and symposiums in both Romania and other countries. Her work includes studies on the image of wine in Sufi literature or the use of hashish in the Ottoman Empire. Currently, for her Ph.D. Thesis, Oana Chirilă is studying intoxicants in Muslim Hip Hop, with an emphasis on the connection between Hip Hop and organizations such as Nation of Islam and the Five Percenters.

### **Travis T. Harris**



Travis Harris is a Doctoral Candidate in William and Mary's American Studies program. His research primarily focuses on African and Africans throughout the Diasporas. His dissertation examines the dispossession of a predominantly Black community from Magruder during World War II and the creation of Camp Peary. In addition to thinking about how Africans have been taken from their homes, Travis also studies African diasporic cultures and aesthetics. He has written two Master's Thesis that have analyzed Hip Hop and religion and published the first academic article on Lecrae. Co-editing this special issue falls directly in line with this scholarly trajectory.

While academics play an important part in Travis' life, his scholarly work connects with what is most important to him, his family and getting Blacks free. Travis is actively involved in the freedom struggle. He also worked with The Lemon Project, which focuses on William and Mary's role in perpetuating slavery and racial discrimination. Travis has served as the Vice President of I.M.P.A.C.T., a faith-based organization in Charlottesville that has fought for justice for the disenfranchised in Charlottesville. He

formerly organized for Black Lives Matter-Williamsburg and now organizes with the International Black Freedom Alliance. Most notably, he supports Jackie and the work of the Village. He recognizes his scholarly work as life work with the goal of empowering those “from the bottom” to thrive.

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### **Matthew Linder**



Matthew Linder is an Adjunct Music Professor at National University. His work focuses on the intersection of popular culture, music, and faith, with a specific focus on Hip Hop. He has presented on this intersection in Hip Hop at various conferences throughout United States. His work includes exploring themes of Christian liberation in Hip Hop and the ways in which self-identified Christian rappers fight against systemic racism with their music.

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### **Waqas Mirza**



Waqas Mirza is third year PhD student and teacher at the University of Oxford. His research interests include 20th century French and English literature, poetry, cultural studies, African American studies, hip hop studies, and the representation of the mind and consciousness in the arts. Waqas’ bilingualism naturally drove him towards the study of French and English literature in his hometown at the University of Geneva, Switzerland. He continued to work in Geneva as a teacher, a translator and a theatre reviewer before coming to Oxford to pursue his doctoral studies. His doctoral thesis explores an essential component of Beckett’s artistic process; namely, the act of translating his own works.

### **Dwight A. Radcliff, Jr.**



Dwight Radcliff is a Ph.D. Candidate at Fuller Theological Seminary's School of Intercultural Studies. His research focuses on the influence of Hip Hop on the formation of African American preachers. Dwight works as an adjunct professor at Azusa Pacific University (Dept. of Practical Theology) and Vanguard University of Southern California (Dept. of Social Sciences). He preaches and lectures locally, nationally, and internationally on culture, evangelism, millennials, church planting, and urban ministry. Dwight is the Lead Pastor of The Message Center, a non-denominational, multicultural church-plant that has Pentecostal roots. However, Dwight's own ministry experience covers various denominational contexts including Presbyterian, Lutheran, Methodist, and Baptist traditions. His work and ministry have garnered him recognition and commendations from City, County, State, and Federal officials. He also mentors other pastors and church planters. Dwight is married to DeShun, his love and first ministry. They have two daughters and live in Orange County, California.

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### **Shea Watts**



Shea Watts is a third-year Ph.D. student at Chicago Theological Seminary. His research focuses on the role of the body in ritual studies and liberation spiritualities, specifically looking at musical expressions and ecstatic experiences through the lens of affect theory. In addition to his research, Shea is a songwriter, artist, and studio musician.

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### **Daniel L. Williams**



Daniel Lester Williams studied Journalism and Cultural Studies at Bowling Green State University. His research interests include 20th century social movements, local history, and the intersection of race, class, and gender in Hip Hop culture. As an educator he works with middle and high school students with mild to moderate needs and is planning to launch his Web site, [boonesbeat.com](http://boonesbeat.com) in August 2018.

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