

# KRYSTAL A. SMALLS

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## EDUCATION

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- 2015 University of Pennsylvania, PhD**  
Africana Studies and Educational Linguistics  
Dissertation Committee: John L. Jackson (chair); Betsy Rymes (co-chair); Arthur K. Spears,  
H. Samy Alim, Cheikh Anta Babou
- 2000 Cornell University, BS**  
Industrial and Labor Relations  
Meinig Family Cornell National Scholar  
African Diaspora Studies Minor

## ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

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- 2017-present Assistant Professor**, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign  
Department of Anthropology (75%); Department of Linguistics (25%), affiliate of  
Department of African American Studies and the African Studies Center
- 2015-17 Postdoctoral Research Associate and Lecturer**, University of Illinois Urbana-  
Champaign, Department of Anthropology
- 2014-15 Dissertation Fellow and Lecturer**, University of California, Santa Barbara  
Department of Black Studies
- 2014 Instructor**, University of Pennsylvania  
Graduate School of Education
- 2013-2014 Adjunct Professor**, Arcadia University  
School of Education
- 2011-2014 Adjunct Professor**, Philadelphia University  
College of Science, Health, and Liberal Arts

## HONORS AND AWARDS

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- 2022-24 **Lincoln Excellence for Assistant Professors (LEAP) Scholar**
- 2021-22 **Call to Action to Address Racism & Social Injustice Research Program** – “Diaspora and  
Border Racial Justice Youth Project” (\$24.7K) (University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign)
- 2021 **Multiracial Democracy Manuscript Award** awarded by the Campus Research Board (\$3.3K)  
(University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign)
- 2021 **Humanities Research Institute Faculty Research Prize** (University of Illinois Urbana-  
Champaign)
- 2021 **Spotlighted in “Stars from the AAA Sections” in *Anthropology News***
- 2018-19 **Illinois Program for Research in the Humanities Faculty Fellow** (University of Illinois  
Urbana-Champaign)
- 2014 **Black Studies Dissertation Fellowship** (University of California, Santa Barbara)
- 2013 **Honorable Mention, Ford Foundation Dissertation Fellowship**

- 2012        **Summer Research Grant** (University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology)
- 2008-13    **William D. Fontaine Fellowship** (University of Pennsylvania)
- 2008-12    **Carmen T. Middleberg Fellowship** (University of Pennsylvania)
- 2009        **Stephen Peck Award** (Society for Pidgin and Creole Linguistics)
- 1996-00    **Cornell National Scholar** (Cornell University)

## **PUBLICATIONS**

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### **Books**

*Telling Blackness: Young Liberians and the Raciosemiotics of Contemporary Black Diaspora*, Oxford University Press (under contract)

### **Journal Publications**

Davis, Jenny L. and Krystal A. Smalls. "Dis/possession Afoot: American (Anthropological) Traditions of Anti-Blackness and Coloniality" *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 31, no. 2 (2021): 275-282.

"Fat, Black, and Ugly: The Semiotic Production of Prodigious Femininities." *Transforming Anthropology* 29, no. 1 (2021): 12-28.

"Fighting Words: Antiblackness and Discursive Violence in an American High School." *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 28, No 3 (2018): 356-383.

"'We had lighter tongues': Making and mediating Gullah/Geechee personhood in the South Carolina Lowcountry," *Language and Communication* 32, no. 20 (2012): 147-159.

"Flipping the Script: (Re)constructing Personhood through Hip Hop Linguaging in a U.S. High School," *Working Papers in Educational Linguistics* 25, no. 2 (2010): 35-54.

### **Other**

Smalls, Krystal A., Arthur K. Spears and Jonathan Rosa. "Introduction: Language and White Supremacy." *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 31, no. 2 (2021): 152-156.

"Introduction to the Forum on Language and Anti-Blackness." *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 31, no. 2 (2021): 258-260.

### **Book Chapters**

Smalls, Krystal A. and Jenny L. Davis, "Language and racism" In the *New Wiley Blackwell Companion to Linguistic Anthropology*, edited by Alessandro Duranti, Rachel George, and Robin Conley Riner. West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons Limited. (Forthcoming).

"Race, Signs, and the Body: Towards a Theory of Racial Semiotics" In the *Oxford Handbook of Language and Race*, edited by H. Samy Alim, Paul Kroskrity, and Angela Reyes. New York: Oxford University Press. (2020): 233-260.

"Languages of Liberation: Digital Discourses of Emphatic Blackness" In *Language and Social Justice in Practice*, edited by Netta Avineri, Robin Conley Riner, Laura Graham, Eric Johnson, and Jonathan Rosa. New York: Routledge. (2019): 52-60.

"Racialized Masculinity in Digital Space" In *Gender: Space*, edited by Aimee Meredith Cox. Macmillan Reference USA, (2018): 301-315.

“The Proverbial Monkey on Our Backs: Exploring the Politics of Belonging among Transnational African High School Students in the US.” In *US Education in a World of Migration*, edited by Jill Koyama and Mathangi Subramanian, New York: Routledge, (2014): 19-37.

### **Book Reviews**

Review of *Real Black: Adventures in Racial Sincerity*, by John L. Jackson, *Transforming Anthropology* 21, no. 2 (2013): 205-207.

Review of *The Real Hip-hop: Battling for Knowledge, Power, and Respect in the LA Underground*, by Marcyliena Morgan, *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 22, no. 3 (2013): 247-250.

(with Catrice Barrett) Review of *Languages of Global Hip Hop*, edited by Marina Terkourafi, *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* 43, no. 4 (2012): 446-448.

### **Non-academic**

“Daughters of the Dust and the Place of the Gullah/Geechee” *Public I* (April 2017).

<http://publici.ucimc.org/daughters-of-the-dust-and-the-place-of-the-gullahgeechee/>

## **INVITED LECTURES**

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- Apr 2021 **Brandeis University** - “Digital Body-Snatching: TikTok, Utilitarian Anti-Blackness, and the Entextualization of the Black Body in Social Media” Department of Anthropology
- Apr 2021 **Stanford University** - “From Dispossession to Overdetermination: A Contemporary Racial Semiotics” w/ Jonathan Rosa. Department of Anthropology.
- Apr 2021 **Indiana University** - “Water in Our Veins: A Reflection on Saltwater Ontologies of the Gullah/Geechee.” Diverse Environmentalisms Research Team
- Apr 2021 **University of Arizona** - “Digital Body Snatching: TikTok, Utilitarian Anti-Blackness, and the Entextualization of the Feminine Black Body in Social Media” Department of Anthropology
- Nov 2020 **University of Chicago and University of Colorado- Boulder** - Discussant for “Alt-Signaling: White Violence, Military Fantasies, and Racial Stock in Trump’s America” by Janet McIntosh and Norma Mendoza-Denton, *Talking Politics: Anthropologists and Linguists Analyze the 2020 Election*
- Nov 2020 **University of Texas – Austin** - “Utilitarian Anti-Blackness: Body-Snatching, White Pleasure, and the Entextualization of the Black Body in Digital Space.” Department of Anthropology
- Oct 2020 **University of California, Los Angeles** - “Utilitarian Anti-Blackness: Body-Snatching, White Pleasure, and the Entextualization of the Black Body in Digital Space.” Discourse Lab. Department of Linguistics
- Oct 2020 **University of Pennsylvania** - “Utilitarian Anti-Blackness: Body-Snatching, White Pleasure, and the Entextualization of the Black Body in Digital Space.” Colloquium Series *White Supremacy and the Making of the Modern World*. Department of Anthropology
- May 2020 **University of Chicago** - “Utilitarian Antiblackness: Body-Snatching in Digital Space” Semiotics: Culture in Context Workshop. Department of Anthropology
- Sep 2019 **Harvard University** - “Real Black: Emphatically Black Signs and Fugitive Humanity in Digital Space.” Roman Jakobson Symposium. Department of Anthropology
- May 2019 **Northwestern University**- “White Noise: The Semiotics of Intentional Whiteness & Epistemic Resistance in Digital Space.” Northwestern Anthropology Colloquium Series. Department of Anthropology
- Feb 2019 **Southern Illinois University-Carbondale** - “Diaspora Now: Young Liberians and the Semiotics of Transnational Blackness.” Linguistics Colloquium Series., Department of Linguistics.

## PLENARIES AND KEYNOTES

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- Apr 2022 **Keynote** “Signs of Life: A Raciosemiotic Look at the Meaning and Matter(ing) of Black Life.” Society for Linguistic Anthropology Spring Conference – Boulder, CO.
- Apr 2019 **Plenary** “Tweet Nation: Studying Language, Race, and Identity in the Era of Trump.” Sociolinguistics Symposium at the Illinois Language and Linguistics Society Annual Conference – University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.
- Mar 2019 **Plenary** “White Noise: Cancelled Whiteness, Emphatic Blackness, and the Semiotics of Epistemic Resistance in Digital Life.” Ethnographic Futures Conference, American Ethnological Society – St. Louis, MO
- Apr 2018 **Keynote** “Ain't No Stopping Us Now:” Reflections on a Musical Journey through Collaborative Diaspora and African Infinity.” Re-Affirming Our Value: Africa’s Contributions to the World, African Student Organization Annual Spring Forum – University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

## CAMPUS TALKS

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- Apr 2020 “Digital Body Snatching: Tiktok, Utilitarian Anti-Blackness, and the Entextualization of the Feminine Black Body in Social Media” Let’s Talk Research Brown Bag Series  
**Department of African American Studies, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign**
- Feb 2018 “Digital Diaspora and Blackness,” Black History Month & Beyond Brown Bag Series.  
**Department of African American Studies, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign**
- Apr 2017 “Familiar Strangers: Belonging and Dissonance in Contemporary African Diaspora”  
Invited Speaker: Africa: Next Generation of Leadership for Tomorrow’s Change, Growth and Innovation. **African Student Organization Annual Spring Forum, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign**
- May 2015 “Exploring the Semiotics of Digital Personhood: Emphatic Blackness in Selfies and Memes.”  
**Language, Interaction, and Social Organization (LISO), University of California, Santa Barbara**

## SELECTED CONFERENCES PRESENTATIONS

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- 2022 Panelist on “Teaching in Times of Crisis and Hope: A Roundtable Discussion on Language and Social Justice in the Classroom” **Society for Linguistic Anthropology Fall Conference 2020**, Boulder, CO
- 2021 Panelist on “Actualized Truths, Global Inheritances: Black Youth Practice Digital Diaspora”  
**American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting 2021**, Washington DC
- 2019 “The “Black Body” in Digital Space: Digital Utterances and Anti-Black Epistemes” Panel: Semiotic Pathways to Social Justice: Theory, Technology, and Transformation **American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting**, Vancouver, Canada
- 2019 “The Pot and the Kettle: The Politics of Skin Color in Early Liberia” Panel: Marking the Skin, Past and Present **Association for the Study of the Worldwide African Diaspora**, Williamsburg, VA
- 2019 “The Water: Examining the Meanings of Saltwater in the Making of Gullah Past, Present, and Futures” **International Gullah Geechee and African Diaspora Conference**, Myrtle Beach, SC
- 2018 “The Future is Black: Transnational Liberian Youth and the Making of Black Modernities” **Liberian Studies Association (LSA) Annual Conference**, University of Rochester
- 2017 “Very Black and Very Human: Signifying in Digital Space” Panel: (Organizer) Language, Race, and Digital Space **American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting, Washington DC**
- 2017 Panelist for Society for Linguistic Anthropology Presidential Conversation: Mentoring and Social Justice **American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting**, Washington DC
- 2017 “#BlackHumanity: Digital Space as a New Terrain of Black Resistance” Panel: Re-envisioning Social Spaces of Resistance and Collective Identities in the African Diaspora **Association for the Study of the Worldwide African Diaspora**, Sevilla, Spain

- 2016 “Black and Multilingual: Language Education Scholarship and Black Students” Panel: Society for Linguistic Anthropology Presidential Conversation on Multilingual Education & Social Justice **American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting (Society of Linguistic Anthropology)**, Minneapolis, MN
- 2016 “Black Semiosis: Theorizing Black “Ways of Speaking” As Survival Codes” Panel: (Organizer) Talkin' and Testifyin' to Black Humanity: Producing Black Linguistic Anthropology Then and Now **American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting (Association of Black Anthropologists)**, Minneapolis, MN
- 2016 “Discourses of Black Unintelligibility” Panel: Toward a Raciolinguistic Perspective on the Study of Language and Society **Sociolinguistics Symposium 21**, Murcia, Spain
- 2015 “Mediatizing Anti-Anti-Blackness: Emphatic Blackness and Conscious "Unrespectability" in the Digital Sociality of Young Transnational Liberians” Panel: Transnational Processes of Mediatization Within a Digital Moment **American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting (Society of Linguistic Anthropology)**, Denver, CO
- 2015 “Geechee Gyals: “Femixing” the Dirty South and Annexing Caribbean Femininities in Diasporic Self-Making” Panel: Taking Her Place: The Spatial Politics of Black Womanhood **Association for the Study of the Worldwide African Diaspora**, Charleston, SC
- 2014 “Real Niggas and Authentic Africans: Semiotic Productions of Blackness and Belonging in the New Liberian Diaspora” Panel: Citizenship Otherwise: More Lessons from the Savage Slot **American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting (Association of Black Anthropologists)**, Wash, DC
- 2013 “Savages/Settlers/Slaves: Mashing Up Black Subjectivities in Liberia and the Metropole” Panel: Black Mirrors: Emergent Ethnoracial Configurations and Afro-indigenous Futures **American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting (Association of Black Anthropologists)**, Chicago, IL
- 2013 (with Diana Burnett) “Wading in the Waters: Black Immortality, Memory, and Transnational Black Intersubjectivity” Panel: Leaning Towards An Afrofuture: Black Thought and Aesthetics as Praxis **Critical Ethnic Studies Association Annual Meeting**, Chicago, IL
- 2013 (with Chike McLoyd) “New Visions: Black-Identified Transnational Youth Theorizing about Race and Justice” Panel: Epistemic Privilege and Poverty: Conceptualizing Transnational Youth as Social Theorists **American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting**, San Francisco, CA.
- 2012 “Fighting Monkeys and Situating Selves: Mapping Shiny New Blacknesses Via Dirty Old Logics In Contemporary Black Diaspora” Panel: Mapping Diasporic Engagements/Mapping Blackness **American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting (Association of Black Anthropologists)**, San Francisco, CA
- 2011 “Sheng Nation: Constructing Sheng Diaspora and Transforming Language Ideology Online” Panel: Tracing Mobile Language Practices Across Digital Territories. **American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting (Society of Linguistic Anthropology)**, Montreal, Canada
- 2011 “Sheng Nation: Transforming Ideology and Constructing Sheng Literacy Online” **Georgetown University Round Table on Language and Linguistics**, Washington DC
- 2011 “Flipping the Performative Script: (Re)Constructing Models of Identity Through Hip Hop Linguaging and Liberian Englishes in a US High School” **Society of Pidgin and Creole Linguistics (at the Linguistic Society of America Annual Meeting)**, Pittsburgh, PA.
- 2010 (with Chike McLoyd) “It’s Bigger than Hip Hop: Translocal African Youth and Identity in the United States” Panel: Mobilizing Media: Constructing Social Identities in Youth Diaspora. **American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting (Society for Urban, National and Transnational/Global Anthropology)**, New Orleans, LA
- 2010 "The Signifyin' Monkey and Lil Wayne: Co-Constructing Models of Identity Through Hip Hop Linguaging in a US High School" **Multilingualism and Education: Global Practices, Challenges and the Way Forward Conference**, Kenyatta University- Nairobi, Kenya
- 2009 “Lighter Tongues: A Look at Gullah Language Ideology in Two Historic Schools” **Society for Pidgin and Creole Linguistics** and Associação de Crioulos de Base Lexical Portuguesa e Espanhola (ACBPLE), Köln, Germany
- 2009 “We Had Lighter Tongues: Language Teaching and Self-conceptualization in Two Gullah Communities” Panel: Tongue-Tied Territories and the End(s) of Nationhood: Language Purism and Language Politics in Stateless Nations **American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting** Philadelphia, PA

## PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

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2021-22	Member of the Executive Program Committee for the 2022 Annual Meeting, Seattle, <b>American Anthropological Association</b>
2020-22	Member of the Wenner Gren Foundation Panel of Reviewers, <b>Wenner Gren Foundation</b>
2020-22	Member of the Steering Committee for the Society for Linguistic Anthropology Spring Conference, <b>American Anthropological Association</b>
2015-present	Member of Society for Linguistic Anthropology Committee on Language & Social Justice, <b>American Anthropological Association</b>
2017	Chair, Committee on Minority Issues in Anthropology, <b>American Anthropological Association</b>
2013-17	Member, Committee on Minority Issues in Anthropology, <b>American Anthropological Association</b>

## EDITORIAL SERVICE

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2022-present	<b>Editorial Board Member</b> , <i>Journal of Linguistic Anthropology</i>
2021	<b>Guest Editor</b> , (w/ Arthur Spears and Jonathan Rosa), Special Issue on Language and White Supremacy <i>Journal of Linguistic Anthropology</i> (31:2)
2020-24	<b>Editorial Board Member</b> , <i>American Anthropologist</i>
2019-present	<b>Editorial Board Member</b> , <i>Journal of Language, Identity, and Education</i>
2014-present	<b>External Reviewer</b> , <i>American Anthropologist</i> ; <i>Journal of Linguistic Anthropology</i> ; <i>Transforming Anthropology</i> ; <i>Signs and Society</i> ; <i>Language in Society</i> ; <i>Meridians</i> ; <i>Anthropology and Education Quarterly</i> ; <i>American Speech</i> ; <i>Working Papers in Educational Linguistics</i>
2017-18	<b>Editorial Team Member</b> , <i>Anthropology and Education Quarterly</i>
2008-12	<b>Editorial Team Member</b> , <i>Anthropology and Education Quarterly</i>
2010-11	<b>Co-Editor-in-Chief</b> , <i>Working Papers in Educational Linguistics</i>

## SELECTED CAMPUS SERVICE

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2022	Member of Evaluation Committee for the Director of the Center for African Studies
2022-24	Member of the Advisory Committee for Department of Anthropology
2022	Member of the Advisory Committee for Department of Linguistics
2022-23	Co-chair of the Diversity Committee for Department of Linguistics
2021	Created "Graduate Student Retention Report" (w/ Breanna Escamilla) for Department of Anthropology
2021-22	Chair of the Diversity Committee for Department of Linguistics
2020-22	Member of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Working Group
2019-21	Member of the Advisory Committee for the Center for African Studies

## COMMUNITY SERVICE & PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

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- Member of the Demystifying Language Project (2022-23)
- Co-creator and co-director of the Diaspora and Border Racial Justice Youth Project (2021-22)
- Member of Problems in Decolonizing Academia (2020-23)
- Member of Abolition 2 Abundance (2020-21)
- Founding Member of Mass Arrest Mutual Aid Champaign County (2020-21)
- Organizer and facilitator of youth worker and teacher workshop, Monrovia, Liberia (2018)

- Member of Sanctuary for the People at University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (2018-20)
- Panel member *Daughters of the Dust* at the Affirmation & Resistance: Black World Film Series, Art Theater Co-op (2016)
- Panel member *Black Girl* at the Affirmation & Resistance: Black World Film Series, Art Theater Co-op (2016)
- Public lecture for “Science for All” at Orpheum Children’s Science Museum (2018)
- Collaborator with the Ministry for Gender, Children, and Social Protection, Liberia (2012-present)
- Facilitator, youth worker and teacher trainings, Philadelphia, PA (2010-2014)
- Volunteer program director, Ifetayo Cultural Arts Academy, Brooklyn, NY (2006-2008)

## PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

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American Anthropological Association, Association of Black Anthropologists, Society for Linguistic Anthropology, Association for the Study of the Worldwide African Diaspora, Society for Pidgin & Creole Linguistics, Linguistic Society of America, American Education Research Association, Liberian Studies Association, Caribbean Studies Association

## OTHER RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

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<b>Research Assistant/Ethnographer</b> , 2009-14	Project: The New Latino Diaspora in Marshall (Stanton Wortham)
<b>Research Assistant/Ethnographer</b> , 2008-12	Project: Communicative Repertoires and Mass Media (Betsy Rymes)

## LANGUAGES

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**English (US):** dominant language  
**African American Language:** Advanced Listener, Speaker, Reading and Writing  
**Spanish:** Novice Listener, Intermediate Speaker, Advanced Reading and Writing  
**Gullah-Geechee:** Intermediate Listener, Speaker, Reading and Writing  
**Kiswahili:** Novice Listener, Speaker, Reading and Writing

## OTHER WORK EXPERIENCE

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2007-2008	<b>Classroom Teacher</b> , 10th Grade English (Special Education); Henrico County, VA
2005-2007	<b>Program Director</b> , Ifetayo Cultural Arts Academy; Brooklyn, New York
2003-2006	<b>Outreach &amp; Communications Assistant</b> , The Parent-Child Home Program; Port Washington, NY
2001-2003	<b>Legislative Assistant</b> , Education/Social Services: US Congress, Rep. José E. Serrano (NY16); Washington DC