

APC Podcast 1.3: C. Riley Snorton on What's Left of Queer Theory Now?

Key terms & concepts

black studies: Black studies is the systematic study of the knowledge, thoughts, and modes of being of African people in both their current and historical manifestations. It intersects various methodologies and perspectives; its unit of analysis is the black world, but it also engages white hegemonic powers and their history of exclusion and dominance¹

Black Queer Studies Conference in 2000

"Black queer studies has come of age. Following on the heels of an explosion of conferences, articles, and books over the last decade, black sexuality studies has been codified as a legitimate scholarly enterprise. While the Black Queer Studies in the Millennium Conference held at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 2000 was a watershed moment, I do not believe anyone in attendance imagined that black queer studies would proliferate the way that it has since the turn of the twenty-first century. But as John D'Emilio has observed about the 1990s as regards gay liberation, the "world turned" in relation to the study of black sexuality between 2000 and 2005."

- from No tea, no shade : new writings in Black queer studies edited by E. Patrick Johnson

- Black Queer Studies: a Critical Anthology (2003)
- Reflections, Riffs and Remembrances: The Black Queer Studies in the Millennium Conference (2000)
- by Bryant Keith Alexander
- Theory in Motion: A Review of the Black Queer Studies in the Millennium Conference by Jennifer DeVere Brody
- Just as Quare as They Want to Be: A Review of the Black Queer Studies in the Millennium Conference by Vincent Woodard

racialization: The discriminatory practice of imposing a racial or ethnic identity on people directly or indirectly as a way of singling them out. Postcolonial theory has been significant in exposing the working of racialization in creating divisions and inequalities among people. Gendered racialization involves the attribution of a combination of ethnic/racial and gender traits, for instance in terms of viewing Asian women as submissive.²

See also Racial Formation in the United States by Michael Omi and Howard Winant

queer color critique: Queer of color critique is a critical discourse that began within the U.S. academy in response to the social processes of migration, neoliberal state and economic formations, and the developments of racial knowledges and subjectivities about sexual and gender minorities within the United States. It was an attempt to maneuver analyses of sexuality toward critiques of race and political economy. As such, the formation was an address to Marxism, ethnic studies, queer studies, postcolonial and feminist studies. Queer of color critique also provided a method for analyzing cultural formations as registries of the intersections of race, political economy, gender, and sexuality. In this way, queer of color critique attempted to wrest cultural and aesthetic formations away from interpretations that neglected to situate those formations within analyses of racial capitalism and the racial state.³

¹ Michel, C. (2009). Black Studies. In (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of African American History 1896 to the Present*. : Oxford University Press

² Griffin, G. racialization. In (Ed.), *A Dictionary of Gender Studies*. : Oxford University Press

³ Ferguson, R. (2018, March 28). Queer of Color Critique. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Literature*

Hortense Spillers

[Black, white, and in color : essays on American literature and culture](#)
[Lecture: Hortense Spillers - Shades of Intimacy: Women in the Time of Revolution](#)
[Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book](#)

Patricia Hill Collins

[Black sexual politics : African Americans, gender, and the new racism](#)
[Fighting Words: Black Women and the Search for Justice](#)

Edouard Glissant: He is best known as one of the principal architects behind [Creoleness](#), the movement to celebrate the cultural, ethnic, and political heterogeneity of the Caribbean. This heterogeneity is born of a fusion of the cultures African slaves brought with them to the so-called 'New World' and the culture and languages of their masters (predominantly, English, French, Spanish, and Portuguese). Neither the culture of the master nor the culture of the slave survived this interaction intact; both were transformed. In his theoretical writings he acknowledges the influence of [Gilles Deleuze](#) and [Félix Guattari](#), especially their concept of the [rhizome](#). For Glissant, the rhizome is a powerful and apt image for Caribbean culture—it may appear unified and coherent on the surface, but beneath the surface there is an incredible tangle of roots and origins that give it its rich character. Creole culture, the product of this rhizomatic root structure, is therefore inherently plural, according to Glissant, a fact that needs to be remembered in the face of certain nationalist and racist movements that extol the virtues of a singular cultural origin (whether it be that of the colonial master or that of some putative African past). For this reason, Glissant was opposed to the concept of [négritude](#) extolled by [Léopold Senghor](#) and [Aimé Césaire](#), but he did not reject it outright. Rather he saw the concept of creole as completing it by enabling the celebration of black identity as it actually is today, as opposed to a kind of melancholic longing for a past and inevitably fantasized identity. The interweaving of dreams and reality is a powerful theme in Glissant's work.⁴

Michel Foucault: According to Foucault, power is not merely something that individuals, groups, or classes exercise, though of course it can be this. Foucault argues that discursive formations are networks of power within which we are all enmeshed. As he claimed on several occasions, power is everywhere and everything, and is therefore 'dangerous'. However, power, he argues, can be positive as well as negative, productive as well as repressive. What is more, he insists that every instance of power brings with it an instance of resistance to power. Foucault's concept of power has been criticized for its vagueness and its generality. However, his own historical writings provide illustrations of his understanding of power and its relationship to discursive formations. Foucault's most important works include *Madness and Civilization* (1961), *Discipline and Punish* (1975), and his *History of Sexuality*, of which there are three published volumes (*An Introduction* (1976), *The Use of Pleasure* (1984), and *The Care of the Self* (1984)).⁵ In *Discipline and Punish* (1975) Foucault examines changes in penal regimes, the 'micro-physics of power' from the public execution of the classical era to the timetable of the modern prison, from the regulation of the body to the regulation of the soul. The strategies of confinement in the prison eventually become the model for the whole of modern society: a regime of observation, surveillance, classification, hierarchy, rules, discipline, and social control. The *History of Sexuality* (vol. i, 1976) was to appear in six volumes but was incomplete at the time of Foucault's death. It is in this work that Foucault's much debated account of power is most clearly stated in the proposition that 'discursive formations' (structures of knowledge or epistemes) both constitute and exert power over social objects (including human bodies).⁶

Franz Fanon: A psychiatrist and revolutionary whose major work examines the psychology of [colonialism](#) and racial subordination. *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) became fundamental texts of the anticolonial movements in the 1960s, and Fanon remains an important point of reference in studies of revolutionary action, colonialism, and the psychology of subordination. While practicing psychiatry in Martinique, his birthplace, Fanon became convinced that many of the pathological conditions he encountered were traceable to social causes, and that the "cures" for these conditions were less a matter of medical practice than of social change. Fanon focused in particular on the process of internalization of the colonial order by the black population—a process that resulted, he argued, in a crippling sense of inferiority among most blacks and a permanent contradiction between the "white mask" of universal subjectivity and the very different social reality imposed by skin

⁴ Buchanan, I. (2018). Glissant, Édouard. In (Ed.), *A Dictionary of Critical Theory*. : Oxford University Press

⁵ *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Politics and International Relations*. : Oxford University Press.

⁶ Scott, J. (Ed.), *A Dictionary of Sociology*. : Oxford University Press.

color. This was the subject of *Black Skin, White Masks*—a work that challenged the official universalism of French society and critiqued Jean-Paul Sartre's existential account of self and other as a relatively fluid dialectical relationship. Fanon placed special emphasis on the role of the colonizer's language in securing the psychological subordination of the oppressed group—particularly the stigmatization of creole French.

epidermalization : According to Snorton, “internalization of the fact of being imprinted by a set of social relations”

diasporic studies : study of diasporas, which have emerged as a result of persecution and forced displacement in times of military conflicts, imperial policies, and—increasingly in more recent times—international trade and transport. Diasporas entail emotional and other forms of attachment to the homeland but also the ever-present challenge of assimilation. Diasporic women hold a central place in the preservation of their native cultures, which in turn causes friction within the domestic sphere and with the host community at large. For women, diasporic existence may represent cultural burdens or an opportunity for greater freedoms from the traditional, patriarchal constraints in the homeland⁷

important works mentioned:

- ["Plum Nelly: New Essays in Queer Black Studies"](#) by Dwight McBride Jennifer Devere Brody
- [Aberrations in Black: Toward a Queer of Color Critique](#) by Roderick A. Ferguson
- [Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?](#) by Cathy J. Cohen
- [No tea, no shade : new writings in Black queer studies](#) edited by E. Patrick Johnson

⁷ Payaslian, S., & Payaslian, S. (2008). Diasporas. In (Ed.), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Women in World History*. : Oxford University Press