

**2018 Report**  
**on the American Philosophical Association Small Grant**  
**Awarded to The Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies**  
**To help support the Philosophy and HBCUs IV Conference on Race and Resistance**

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## **I. Overview (Sense of the Subject Matter)**

The Philosophy and HBCUs conference hosted by Morgan State University began with the objective of centering philosophical discourses as responsive to varied social and cultural topics of concern on HBCU campuses and beyond. Our fourth conference, which was supported by the APA grant, focused on the theme of “Race and Resistance.” The committee on philosophy and public life thought this a relevant and worthwhile subject of exploration, given the current social and political climate--notably an increased progressive resistance in response to the culture of the current White House administration, and its impact upon non-white communities in America.

In mapping out this theme into a format suitable for the presentation of conference papers from representatives in both academic and grassroots guilds, the committee decided upon four areas, followed by a keynote address from Dr. George Yancy, Professor of Philosophy at Emory University: 1) “Embodiment and the Shape of Resistance,” 2) “Philosophical Liberalism and Resistance,” 3) “Black Women and Resistance,” 4) “Philosophies of Resistance in the African Diaspora.”

“Embodiment and the Shape of Resistance” featured paper topics that centered on the actual movement, behavior, and activity of meaning-making of political resistance as an enfolded activity, particularly as a function of black bodies. Given the particular prominence of activist groups like #BlackLivesMatter, this seemed to be a necessary addition in the conference planning stages. “Philosophical Liberalism” definitely had a more academic slant--as it drew upon historical and intellectual resources undergirding liberal discourses and thinking as foundational to constructions of freedom, liberty, and equality--all of which are pertinent to any political platform on behalf of marginalized people. “Black Women and Resistance” address the intersection(s) of race and gender. Often, in both academia and in politically charged spaces, women are relegated to the margins and men’s perspectives are prioritized. To ensure this conference provided a space to think through some of those issues, we thought it vital to make sure this was another component of our conversations.

Finally, in seeking to ensure that our interpretation of race and resistance was not so provincial that it ignored the experiences and insights of those beyond the American border, our final panel incorporated attention to liberationist politics and platforms as grounded in African philosophical and cultural perspectives.

## II. The Program



### Philosophy and HBCUs IV: Race and Resistance

April 7, 2018 Program

This year's conference explores the role that inquiry, reasoning, and criticism play in the development of varied strategies of resistance among minoritized communities in the United States and abroad. Given the locale and context for the conference, we also explore these issues as they impact historically Black colleges and universities and their surrounding communities.

#### 9-10:30am - Embodiment and the Shape of Resistance

Moderated by Seth Vannatta, Morgan State University

James Garrison, Scripps College, "Black Bodies that Matter"

Torin Alexander, Winston-Salem State University, "Black Religious Experience and Black Resistance"

Response by Rev. Heber Brown, Senior Pastor, Pleasant Hope Baptist Church

#### 10:30am-12pm - Philosophical Liberalism and Resistance

Moderated by Leo White, Morgan State University

William Allen, Morgan State University, “Racial Equality and the Limits of Liberalism”

Holly Stevenson, University of Iowa, “Intersecting Ideals: Presenting an Alteration to Mills' Racial Contract”

Response by Sergio España, Director of Engagement and Mobilization, ACLU of Maryland

## **12-1pm - Lunch Break**

## **1-2:30pm - Black Women and Resistance**

Moderated by Daniel Brunson, Morgan State University

Nathifa Greene, Gettysburg College, “Reclaiming My Time”

Shaeeda A. Mensah, American University, “On the Unintelligibility of Korryn Gaines: Resistance to State Violence and the Marginalization of Black Women”

## **2:30-4pm - Philosophies of Resistance in the African Diaspora**

Moderated by Zekeh Gbotokuma, Morgan State University

Tsenay Serequeberhan, Morgan State University, “The Voice of African Philosophy”

Bill Bywater, Allegheny College, “The Black Counter-Gaze: Yancy's Gift”

Response by Chelsey Pennyamon, Morgan State University

## **4pm - Keynote Address**

Moderated by Darrius Hills, Morgan State University

George Yancy, Emory University, “A Letter of Love: An Encounter with White Backlash”

Response by Lawrence Grandpre, Director of Research, Leaders for a Beautiful Struggle

*We dedicate this conference to the memory of Dr. Otto Begus (1932-2018), who devoted his career to teaching Morgan's students and led our department for over a quarter of a century.*

Sponsored by:



### III. Budget

Expense Description	Amount
Honorarium for Keynote speaker	\$750
Honorarium for 11 participants of \$250 each	\$2,750
Food Services	\$700
Print Reproductions	\$215

### IV. Attendance and Feedback

Over the course of the day, approximately 60 people attended the conference, of whom 30 signed in. For any one session there were approximately 30 people in the room.

The evaluations we received from the feedback form we had attendees fill out was overwhelmingly positive. The only area in which we did not receive strong positive feedback regraded logistics. In more detail:

*Overall conference evaluation:*

Excellent: 75%

Very Good: 25%

*This conference was well organized:*

Strongly Agree: 50%

Agree: 50%

*Overall, the presenters were very knowledgeable:*

Strongly Agree: 37.5%

Agree: 62.5%

*The content was at the breadth and depth that I expected:*

Strongly Agree: 37.5%

Agree: 62.5%

*The content was relevant and helpful:*

Strongly Agree: 62.5%

Agree: 3 (37.5%)

*The facilities were appropriate:*

Strongly Agree: 50%

Agree: 50%

*The registration process was simple and straightforward:*

Strongly Agree: 37.5%

Agree: 50%

Not Applicable: 12.5%

*The logistics (directions and parking) information was useful:*

Agree: 37.5%

Neither: 25%

Disagree: 37.5%

*My expectations of this conference were met:*

Strongly Agree: 50%

Agree: 50%

The written comments detailed the lack of more positive feedback regarding logistics. This had to do with the lack of parking and signage for parking. More on this point under “Challenges and Successes.”

## **V. Challenges and Successes**

Each of our successes revealed challenging paths forward.

For instance, each of the panels consisted of two academic papers and a response from a non-academic member of the Baltimore community. Going forward, we would like to have equal representation of academics and non-academics. A specific challenge here is the nature of academic versus non-academic work. University professors generally do not expect honoraria for conferences because they conceive of research as part of their job. People from the wider community do not, and require honoraria for what is otherwise unpaid labor.

We were very satisfied with the presence and participation of members of the wider community. Our outreach for this conference built on a roundtable we had in Spring 2017 on the Department of Justice Report on the Baltimore Police Department. In addition, we had vigorous discussions which included philosophers and non-philosophers. That said, what would it look like to have a hundred people present? Five hundred? We have appropriate spaces on campus. The challenge here may be outreach. How can we better reach the greater Baltimore community? The challenge may be different, however: How can we take a conference like this off the university campus and *into the community*?

Logistically, the conference was largely a success. That said, navigating the university bureaucracy has a learning curve. For instance, the parking garage was closed for repairs. In retrospect, we should have found alternative parking and posted clear signage around campus directing people to the conference. In addition, we need to find ways to incentivize people to complete conference evaluation forms.

## **VI. Future Work**

The challenges and successes of the work leading up to, the day of, and the post-assessment of the conference provided several opportunities for future work. First, it helped our department further develop our public scholarship vision and the concrete goals of our Public Life Committee.

Second, the conference helped our department to improve upon and develop new relationships with community partners. We had previously worked with members of the Leaders of a Beautiful Struggle organization and with Rev. Heber Brown. These relationships were strengthened through the conference work and there is a mutual desire to continue to work together on future projects. Rev. Brown, for example, has expressed interest in partnering up on a future project involving food, race, and justice. New relationships were developed with conference participant Sergio España and the ACLU of Maryland and several other conference attendees as well.

Third, the conference provided a strong example of the kind of work that our Public Life Committee is committed to and helped to strengthen our application for a Henry Luce

Foundation grant. Our application was successful and we are happy to report that the APA's support of our conference had a major impact in the development of the successful application for a Center for the Study of Religion and the City that seeks to support collaborations between public scholars and community partners ([www.ReligionAndCities.org](http://www.ReligionAndCities.org)).

Fourth, Dr. Marcos Bisticas-Cocoves, Dr. Darrius Hills, and several conference participants are currently working on getting a contract to publish an edited volume based on the presented papers. A draft of the proposal has been completed. Palgrave and Lexington have already expressed interest in publishing the edited volume on Race and Resistance.

Lastly, the conference provided another successful iteration of the Philosophy and HBCU's biannual series and has provided a solid foundation for a future, April 2020, conference. For that future iteration, we hope to include more community partners, expand the support for participation from HBCU scholars, and increase public awareness of the conference.

Support from the APA small grant has thus provided us with the opportunity to further develop our public scholarship vision and future commitments, to strengthen existing relationships with community partners and develop new ones, to develop other grant applications - including the successful HLF application for our new Center for the Study of Religion and the City, to pave the way for a publication on Race and Resistance, and begin work on the next iteration of the biannual Philosophy and HBCUs conference.