WILLIAMS COLLEGE LIBRARIES PRESENTS:

THE LIFE AND LORE OF STERLING A. BROWN: CELEBRATING POETRY, PROSE, AND MUSIC

VIRTUAL SYMPOSIUM PROGRAM

October 19-21, 2022
STERLING ALLEN BROWN WAS BORN IN WASHINGTON, D.C. ON MAY 1, 1901. HE WAS EDUCATED AT DUNBAR HIGH SCHOOL AND RECEIVED A BACHELOR’S DEGREE FROM WILLIAMS COLLEGE AND WAS ELECTED TO PHI BETA KAPPA. HE STUDIED THE WORK OF EZRA POUND AND T. S. ELIOT, BUT WAS MORE INTERESTED IN THE WORKS OF AMY LOWELL, EDGAR LEE MASTERS, ROBERT FROST, AND CARL SANDBURG. IN 1923, HE EARNED A MASTER’S DEGREE FROM HARVARD UNIVERSITY AND WAS EMPLOYED AS A TEACHER AT THE VIRGINIA SEMINARY AND COLLEGE IN LYNCHBURG UNTIL 1926. THREE YEARS LATER, BROWN BEGAN TEACHING AT HOWARD UNIVERSITY AND, IN 1932, HIS FIRST POETRY COLLECTION, SOUTHERN ROAD (HARCOURT, BRACE), WAS PUBLISHED. BROWN THEN PUBLISHED TWO CRITICAL STUDIES, THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN FICTION AND NEGRO POETRY AND DRAMA, BOTH PUBLISHED BY ASSOCIATES IN NEGRO FOLK EDUCATION IN 1937. HE NEXT EDITED THE NEGRO CARAVAN (THE CITADEL PRESS, 1941), AN ANTHOLOGY COVERING NEARLY TWO HUNDRED YEARS OF AFRICAN AMERICAN POETRY.


BROWN DIED ON JANUARY 13, 1989 IN TAKOMA PARK, MARYLAND.

(BIO FROM POETS.ORG)
This symposium is two-fold, as it will mark the much anticipated opening of the Sterling A. Brown papers, as well as celebrate Prof. Brown's centennial graduation from Williams College.
GALLERY EXHIBITION

REVELATIONS

OCTOBER 19, 2022

CURATED BY JESSICA C. NEAL
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<td>5:00 - 5:10 PM</td>
<td>Opening Remarks, Lisa Conathan.</td>
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<td>5:10 - 5:25 PM</td>
<td>Remarks by Jacqueline Combs, Laura Dennis, and Gisele Sonnier.</td>
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<td>5:25 - 5:30 PM</td>
<td>Poetry reading, LeBaron Thornton.</td>
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<td>5:30 - 6:45 PM</td>
<td>&quot;Looking South to a Very Old Place,&quot; Presentation by Edgar Tidwell. Moderated by Jes Neal.</td>
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<td>7:00- 8:00PM</td>
<td>Keynote with Dr. Imani Perry and Prof. Paula J. Giddings. Moderated by Amber Zu-Bolton.</td>
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All panels and music performances are virtual. Please check email for zoom links.


3:15 - 4:45 PM


5:00 - 6:45 PM


"Where Music and Dancing Are Concerned," Music performance by Steven Tracy.

SAB Letter Reading, Jason B. Lucas.

Panel session moderated by Akhir Stewart.

6:45 - 7:15 PM

Closing remarks: Jes Neal.

Closing performance: Cornelius Eady Trio.
MUSIC OFFERINGS

FRIENDSHIP HEIGHTS PLAYLIST,
DUKE ELLINGTON

DJ KAILYN HYPE
BIRTHDAY MIX
ACCESS THE MIX HERE
SPEAKERS, PANELISTS, AND MODERATORS

DR. IMANI PERRY


PROF. PAULA J. GIDDINGS


MS. GIDDINGS IS A JOURNALIST, AND FORMER MAGAZINE AND BOOK EDITOR. SHE IS THE EDITOR EMERITA OF MERIDIANS: FEMINISM, RACE, TRANSNATIONALISM, A PEER-REVIEWED JOURNAL THAT IS HOUSED AT SMITH AND PUBLISHED BY DUKE UNIVERSITY PRESS. GIDDINGS HAS BEEN A BOOK EDITOR AT RANDOM HOUSE AND HOWARD UNIVERSITY PRESS;

Giddings has been awarded fellowships by the Guggenheim Foundation; the National Humanities Center in Research Triangle Park and has honorary doctorates from Wesleyan University, Bennett College, and Howard University. She was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2017.

Amber Zu-Bolton

Is a scholar, historian and educator from New Orleans. Growing up in her parents’ copastetic community bookcenter, Amber was immersed in a cultural village of artists and culture bearers which continues to guide her work today. Amber studied film and history at Howard University and received an MA in history from the University of New Orleans where she focused on Black literary and cultural history. Her current research projects include Black Theater in New Orleans, the role of Stevie Wonder’s “Happy Birthday” in the creation of the Dr. Martin Luther King Holiday and the Parents Music Resource Center’s war on explicit music. Other research projects include New Deal programs and Black women educators in 20th Century New Orleans. She has presented at various conferences from the American Historical Association to the PoBoy Festival in New Orleans.

LeBaron Thornton

LeBaron Thornton is a poet, hip hop artist, filmmaker, & humanist of southern descent. After receiving a degree in film & communications from University of Alabama at Birmingham, he moved to New Orleans starting a career in music & film.

Most recently on the slate he’s acted in Le Petit Theater’s original production Anthology of Negro Poets as Sterling Brown, Choir Boy as Headmaster Marrow, & Puhi Theater’s The Glass Menagerie as Tom Wingfield. Maintaining a working artists lifestyle, producing and acting in several shorts including, Last Looks, directed by Cierra Glaupe and starring Rutina Wesley, featured on Issa Rae Presents, The Love Song of M. Anderson Vincent winning runner up in Louisiana Shorts in New Orleans Film Festival.

A music career highlighted by rocking a packed house with the Robert Glasper Experiment one night in Nola, & opening up for Georgia Anne Muldrow at the Ace Hotel. His music has been featured on Bounce TV’s Finding Happy & the upcoming film They Cloned Tyrone.

LeBaron is currently working and living in New Orleans, cooking up some mo’ heat.
AVERY SHARPE

BASSIST AVERY SHARPE WAS BORN IN VALDOSTA, GEORGIA AND HIS FIRST INSTRUMENT WAS THE PIANO. "I STARTED PLAYING WHEN I WAS EIGHT YEARS OLD," HE RECALLS. "MY MOTHER IS A PIANO PLAYER/ CHOIR DIRECTOR IN THE CHURCH OF GOD IN CHRIST, AND SHE GAVE LESSONS TO EVERYBODY IN THE FAMILY—I'M THE SIXTH OF EIGHT CHILDREN—BUT IT DIDN'T STICK UNTIL IT GOT TO ME." HE MOVED ON TO ACCORDION AND THEN SWITCHED TO ELECTRIC BASS IN HIGH SCHOOL, AFTER HIS FAMILY HAD RELOCATED TO SPRINGFIELD, MA. HE STUDIED ECONOMICS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS, AMHERST, MA., WHILE HE PLAYED ELECTRIC BASS IN GOSPEL, FUNK, AND ROCK GROUPS. WITH ENCOURAGEMENT FROM RENOWNED BASSIST REGGIE WORKMAN, HE LEARNED ACOUSTIC BASS AND SOON WAS PERFORMING WITH ARCHIE SHEPP AND ART BLAKEY.

IN 1980, SHARPE WON A SPOT IN MCCOY TYNER’S GROUP AND WORKED WITH HIM FOR THE NEXT 20 PLUS YEARS, PLAYING HUNDREDS OF GIGS WORLDWIDE AND APPEARING ON MORE THAN 20 RECORDINGS WITH TYNER. SHARPE’S CREDITS ALSO INCLUDE SIDEMAN STINTS AND RECORDINGS WITH JAZZ GREATS LIKE DIZZY GILLESPIE, WYNTON MARSALES, YUSEF LATEEF, BOBBY MCFERRIN, PAT METHENY, BILLY TAYLOR AND MANY MORE HIS FIRST RECORDING AS A LEADER WAS THE 1988 ALBUM UNSPOKEN WORDS ON SUNNYSIDE RECORDS.

AVERY SHARPE WAS THE STERLING BROWN '22 DISTINGUISHED VISITING ARTIST IN RESIDENCE IN MUSIC AT WILLIAMS COLLEGE AND WAS ARTIST ASSOCIATE IN JAZZ BASS, AND JAZZ COACH AT WILLIAMS COLLEGE. HE WAS ALSO FACULTY ADVISOR FOR THE WILLIAMS GOSPEL CHOIR AND AFFILIATED FACULTY FOR AFRICANA STUDIES. HIS AWARDS INCLUDE THE NAACP MARTIN LUTHER KING JR SPECIAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD, SEVERAL NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS GRANTS AND THE NEW ENGLAND FOUNDATION FOR THE ARTS ACHIEVEMENT IN JAZZ AWARD.

WEBSITE: WWW.AVERYSHARPE.COM

LAURI SCHEYER


TONY BOLDEN

TONY BOLDEN IS PROFESSOR OF AFRICAN AND AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDIES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS. HIS BOOKS INCLUDE AFRO-BLUE: IMPROVISATIONS IN AFRICAN AMERICAN POETRY AND CULTURE AND GROOVE THEORY: THE BLUES FOUNDATION OF FUNK. BOLDEN IS ALSO EDITOR OF THE LANGSTON HUGHES REVIEW.
JAMES SMETHURST


STEVE TRACY


EDGAR TIDWELL


SINCE 1996, HE HAS BEEN A MEMBER OF THE NOW HUMANITIES KANSAS’S SPEAKERS’ BUREAU AND TALK ABOUT LITERATURE IN KANSAS (TALK) PROGRAM. WITH SEVERAL COLLEAGUES, HE MADE THE KHC-FUNDED SHORT DOCUMENTARY FILM LANGSTON’S LAWRENCE, A BRIEF, FOCUSED LOOK AT HUGHES’S ADOLESCENT YEARS IN KANSAS.
JOANNE V. GABBIN

English professor Joanne V. Gabbin was born on February 2, 1946. She earned her B.A. degree in English from Morgan State College in Baltimore, Maryland in 1967. Gabbin then received her M.A. degree in English in 1970 and her Ph.D. degree in English and literature from the University of Chicago in Chicago, Illinois in 1980.

Gabbin began her career as an instructor of English at Roosevelt University in Chicago, Illinois in 1971. She was then hired as an assistant professor of English at Chicago State University in Chicago, Illinois in 1972, where she remained until 1974. Gabbin served as program director and instructor of Catalyst for Youth, Inc. in Chicago, Illinois from 1973 to 1975. In 1977, Gabbin became an assistant professor of English at Lincoln University. She was promoted to the position of associate professor of English in 1982. Gabbin remained in that position until 1985, when she was hired as an associate professor of English at James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Virginia. In 1987, she helped form the Wintergreen Women Writers’ Collective. Gabbin also became the director of the honors program at James Madison University in 1986 and was promoted to the position of professor of English in 1989. Gabbin organized the first academic conference on African American poetry, entitled “Furious Flower: A Revolution in African American Poetry,” in 1994. She established the Furious Flower Poetry Center at James Madison University in 2005.

In addition to her work as an English professor, Gabbin also published a variety of works that included Sterling A. Brown: Building the Black Aesthetic Tradition, The Furious Flowering of African American Poetry, and Furious Flower: African American Poetry from the Black Arts Movement to the Present. She also published a children’s book, titled I Bet She Called Me Sugar Plum, in 2004.

PHILLIP RICHARDS

Phillip Richards is a professor of English (emeritus) at Colgate University. He has written broadly on early American black writers such as Phillis Wheatley, Jupiter Hammon, David Walker, John Marrant, and others. He is completing a study of these figures, the ideological origins of early African American writing. He has published a book on recent twentieth-century black writing, Black Heart: The Moral Life of Recent African American Letters, and an intellectual memoir, An Integrated Boyhood: Coming of Age in White Cleveland. His work includes literary essays on Sterling Brown, Robert Hayden, Jay Wright, James Baldwin, and Monica Hand as well as university life in France, the United States, and Gabon (French Central Africa). He has a deep interest in the mid-twentieth century cadre of Black American critics.

NAOMI JACKSON

Naomi Jackson is the author of a novel, The Star Side of Bird Hill, which was nominated for an NAACP Image Award and the Hurston/Wright Legacy Award, and longlisted for the National Book Critics Circle’s John Leonard Prize, the Center for Fiction’s First Novel Prize, and the International Dublin Literary Award. The Black Caucus of the American Library Association named Jackson’s novel an honor book for fiction. Jackson studied fiction at the Iowa Writers’ Workshop. She traveled to South Africa on a Fulbright scholarship, where she received an M.A. in creative
AIREA D. MATTHEWS


MICHAEL AWKWARD


JASON B. LUCAS

NADERSON SAINT-PIERRE

PAINTING HAS ALWAYS BEEN A HOBBY FOR NADERSON. HOWEVER, IT WAS NOT ALWAYS SOMETHING HE THOUGHT HE COULD MAKE A LIVING WITH. NADERSON REALIZED HE HAD SOMETHING VALUABLE TO SHARE WITH THE WORLD AND BEGAN PAINTING ONE DAY OUT OF THE WEEK WHICH EVENTUALLY TRANSITIONED TO PAINTING FULL-TIME. SINCE TURNING HIS PASSION INTO A PROFESSION, NADERSON HAS PAINTED PROLIFICALLY AND IS CONSTANTLY EXPLORING NEW SKILLS, GENRES AND IDEAS. IT’S INCREDIBLY HARD WORK, BUT THE LOVE HE HAS FOR HIS CRAFTS IS GENUINE.

NADERSON SAINT-PIERRE PAINTS COLORFUL, COMPPELLING, BLACK PORTRAITUDE. WHILE HE DESCRIBES HIMSELF AS A SELF-TAUGHT ARTIST, HIS WORK IS A TESTAMENT TO HIS INCREDIBLE RAW SKILL AND PRECISE TECHNIQUE. OFTEN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL AND RICH IN NARRATIVE, HIS PORTRAITS HIGHLIGHT AND CELEBRATE AN IMAGE OF BLACK IDENTITY, WITH ODES TO PIONEERS IN THE ART WORLD WHILE CARVING OUT A STYLE THAT IS UNIQUELY SAINT-PIERRE’S OWN. HE’S BEEN PAINTING PROFESSIONALLY SINCE 2016 AND HAS NO INTENTION OF SLOWING DOWN ANYTIME SOON.

CORNELIUS EADY


FACEBOOK: HTTPS://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/CORNELIUS.EADY
TWITTER: HTTPS://TWITTER.COM/ROUGHBAND
INSTAGRAM: HTTPS://WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/BLUESPOET/

AKHIR STEWART

AKHIR ALI (SHE/THEY), WILLIAMS ALUM 2017, IS A PUBLISHED AUTHOR AND CONTRIBUTOR IN AUTOSTRADDLE, MEETING OF MINDS UK, IO LITERARY, AND WOMEN WRITING BERLIN LAB. SHE WRITES FICTION, POETRY, PERSONAL ESSAYS, AND QUEER EROTICA. HER WORK CENTERS CONTRADICTION, DISEMBODIMENT, NATURAL ENVIRONMENT, ANCESTRY, AND INTIMACY.

SHE IS PURSuing HER MFA IN FICTION AND A RECIPIENT OF THE MYERS FELLOWSHIP AT SARAH LAWRENCE COLLEGE.

THEY ALSO MODEL AND BIRDWATCH.
DR. CRYSTAL L. EDWARDS

DR. EWARDS GRADUATED FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF AFRICOLOGY WITH A PH.D. IN AFRICANA STUDIES AND A GRADUATE CERTIFICATE IN EDUCATIONAL POLICY FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN MILWAUKEE. HER WORK HAS CENTERED THE SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCE OF AFRICAN DESCENDED PEOPLE THROUGHOUT THE DIASPORA, SPECIFICALLY THE IN THE UNITED STATES. SHE HAS SPECIFICALLY SOUGHT TO MAKE VISIBLE THE INTERSECTIONAL REALITIES OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN WOMEN AND GIRLS, IN THEIR OWN VOICES.

FOR THREE YEARS’ POST-DOC, SHE WAS A VISITING PROFESSOR IN THE AFRICAN AMERICANS STUDIES DEPARTMENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON. IN THAT CAPACITY, SHE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO DEVELOP AND DESIGN COURSES, ENGAGE IN STUDENT DEVELOPMENT, AND LEAD STUDENTS IN ACADEMIC EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES. WHILE SHE HAS TAUGHT AT THE COLLEGIATE LEVEL FOR THE PAST SEVEN YEARS; SHE HAS EXPANDED HER WORK INTO ADMINISTRATION. AT PRAIRIE VIEW A & M UNIVERSITY SHE HELPED TO DEVELOP THEIR WOMEN’S INITIATIVE AND RESIDENTIAL COLLEGE PROGRAM TO AID IN ENSURING AN EQUITABLE, DIVERSE, AND INCLUSIVE CAMPUS CULTURE.

DR. EDWARDS IS CURRENTLY TEACHING IN THE AFRICANA STUDIES DEPARTMENT AT SAN FRANCISCO STATE UNIVERSITY AND IS THE AUTHOR OF HER STORY: BLACK GIRLS EXPERIENCING THEIR INTERSECTIONAL IDENTITIES IN SCHOOLS.
STERLING A. BROWN PLANNING COMMITTEE

LISA CONATHAN, HEAD OF SPECIAL COLLECTIONS, WILLIAMS COLLEGE

NOAH SMALLS, DIRECTOR OF EXHIBITIONS AND COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT, WILLIAMS COLLEGE

JESSICA C. NEAL (JES) STERLING A. BROWN ARCHIVIST & ARCHIVES CONSULTANT, VANGUARD ARCHIVES CONSULTING

RHON S. MANIGAULT- BRYANT CHAIR AND PROFESSORS OF AFRICANA STUDIES, WILLIAMS COLLEGE

AMALIA CULPEPPER-WEHR, STUDENT, WILLIAMS COLLEGE
THANK YOU!!!

SPECIAL THANKS TO:

BRE REILLY, ADMINISTRATIVE COORDINATOR, SAWYER LIBRARY
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JOHN BURROW, WILLIAMS COLLEGE
RICARDO WILSON, ENGLISH PROFESSOR
BETHANY HICOK, ENGLISH PROFESSOR
LEBARON THORNTON, CREATIVE EXTRAORDINAIRE
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MERRITT BLAKESLEE, ATTORNEY
HOWARD UNIVERSITY
WILLIAMS COLLEGE LIBRARIES STAFF

SPECIAL COLLECTIONS STAFF: LISA CONATHAN, ANNE PEALE, JESSIKA DRMACH, SYLVIA BROWN, LYNN TAFT, LAURA ZEPKA. THIS SIMPLY WOULD NOT BE POSSIBLE WITHOUT YOU ALLS HELP. DEEP GRATITUDE!
THEY DRAGGED YOU FROM HOMELAND,
THEY CHAINED YOU IN COFFLES,
THEY HUDDLED YOU SPOON-FASHION IN FILTHY HATCHES,
THEY SOLD YOU TO GIVE A FEW GENTLEMEN EASE.

THEY BROKE YOU IN LIKE OXEN,
THEY SCOURGED YOU,
THEY BRANDED YOU,
THEY MADE YOUR WOMEN BREEDERS,
THEY SWELLED YOUR NUMBERS WITH BASTARDS . . .
THEY TAUGHT YOU THE RELIGION THEY DISGRACED.

YOU SANG:
KEEP A INCHIN’ ALONG
LAK A PO’ INCH WORM . . .

YOU SANG:
BYE AND BYE
I’M GONNA LAY DOWN DIS HEABY LOAD . . .

YOU SANG:
WALK TOGEDDER, CHILLEN,
DONTCHA GIT WEARY . . .
THE STRONG MEN KEEP A-COMIN’ ON
THE STRONG MEN GIT STRONGER.

THEY POINT WITH PRIDE TO THE ROADS YOU BUILT FOR THEM,
THEY RIDE IN COMFORT OVER THE RAILS YOU LAID FOR THEM.
THEY PUT HAMMERS IN YOUR HANDS
AND SAID—DRIVE SO MUCH BEFORE SUNDOWN.

YOU SANG:
AIN’T NO HAMMAH
IN DIS LAN’,
STRIKES LAK MINE, BEBBY,
STRIKES LAK MINE.

THEY BOUGHT OFF SOME OF YOUR LEADERS
YOU STUMBLED, AS BLIND MEN WILL . . .
THEY COAXED YOU, UNWONTEDLY SOFT VOICED . . .
YOU FOLLOWED A WAY.
THEN LAUGHED AS USUAL.
THEY HEARD THE LAUGH AND WONDERED;
UNCOMFORTABLE;
UNADMITTING A DEEPER TERROR . . .
THE STRONG MEN KEEP A-COMIN’ ON
GITTIN’ STRONGER . . .

WHAT, FROM THE SLUMS
WHERE THEY HAVE HEMMED YOU,
WHAT, FROM THE TINY HUTS
THEY COULD NOT KEEP FROM YOU—
WHAT REACHES THEM
MAKING THEM ILL AT EASE, FEARFUL?
TODAY THEY SHOUT PROHIBITION AT YOU
"THOU SHALT NOT THIS"
"THOU SHALT NOT THAT"
"RESERVED FOR WHITES ONLY"
YOU LAUGH.

ONE THING THEY CANNOT PROHIBIT—
THE STRONG MEN . . . COMING ON
THE STRONG MEN GIT STRONGER.
STRONG MEN . . .
STRONGER . . .

BY STERLING A. BROWN
THE STERLING A. BROWN SYMPOSIUM IS DEDICATED TO BLACK WILLIAMS