

Schedule:

- 3 PM Welcome: Deborah Willis, Chair,
Department of Photography and Imaging,
NYU Tisch School of the Arts
- 3:05 Introduction: Cheryl Finley, Richard Cohen Fellow,
Hutchins Center, Harvard University
- 3:15 Roundtable Discussion, Speakers in order of
appearance: Professor Salamishah Tillet, Bree
Newsome, Sheila Pree Bright, Professor Aimee
Meredith Cox, Aurielle Marie, Michaela angela
Davis moderated by Cheryl Finley.
- 4:45 Audience Q & A
- 5:00 Program Ends

The panel is inspired by the New York Times essay "Female Visibility Matters" - <http://nyti.ms/1EhFL2H> by Salamishah Tillet; Bree Newsome's courageous act of removing the Confederate flag; Aimee Cox's new book *Shapeshifters: Black Girls and the Choreography of Citizenship*; activist Aurielle Marie's #ItsBiggerThanYou movement, Michaela angela Davis' *MADFREE: Liberating Conversations About Image Beauty and Power*, and Sheila Pree Bright's photographic project *1960Now*. It is a continuation of my personal interest in working with today's innovative change-makers.

-Deborah Willis

Organized by:
New York University's
Institute of African American Affairs
Tisch Department of Photography & Imaging
tisch.nyu.edu/photo

Co-sponsored by: New York University's Department of Social and Cultural Analysis, Africana Studies Program in the Department of Social and Cultural Analysis and Ulrich Baer, Vice Provost for Faculty, Arts, Humanities and Diversity. For more information, please visit tisch.nyu.edu/photo or contact NYU's Institute of African American Affairs at 212. 998. 2130



Janelle Monae, Black Lives Matter protest in Atlanta, September 2015, Sheila Pree Bright

(JUST) # SAYHERNAME:

RACE AND GENDER
IN SOCIAL PRACTICE

Saturday, December 12, 2015
3:00-5:00 pm
New York University
Jurow Lecture Hall
100 Washington Square East
New York, NY 10012



Ferguson, March 2015, Sheila Pree Bright

This roundtable focusing on art, writing and social engagement highlighting the voices of women and girls, is foregrounded in public memory and the work of women and girls. The panelists include artists-activists-scholars such as Aimee Meredith Cox, Sheila Pree Bright, Aurielle Marie, Michaela angela Davis, Bree Newsome and Salamishah Tillet, moderated by Cheryl Finley.



Sheila Pree Bright is an award-winning fine-art photographer nationally known for her photographic series, *1960Who*, *Young Americans*, *Plastic Bodies* and *Suburbia*. National attention peaked shortly after Bright earned a M.F.A. in Photography from Georgia State University. In 2006, she received the Center Prize from the Santa Fe Center of Photography for *Suburbia*. In the art world, she is described as a “cultural anthropologist” portraying large-scale

works that combine a wide range of contemporary culture. She went viral on Huffington Post for her *Plastic Bodies* series, which also appeared in the award-winning documentary, *Through the Lens Darkly*, which explores the important role of Black photographers in capturing identity and celebrating images that pay tribute to the humanity of African Americans. Bright’s most current work, *1960Now* opened at The Museum of Contemporary Art, GA in October 2015.



Aimee Meredith Cox, Ph.D. is a cultural anthropologist and movement artist who teaches at Fordham University in the department of African and African American Studies. She is the author of *Shapeshifters: Black Girls and the Choreography of Citizenship* (Duke 2015) and the forthcoming edited volume, *Gender & Space* (Macmillan). She has written peer-reviewed articles and book chapters on performance, race and gender in youth culture, and the politics of cultural production. Aimee is a former professional dancer who toured widely with *Ailey II/The Alvin Ailey Repertory Ensemble*. She is also the founder of BlackLight, an activist art initiative led by young women of color that produced community-based projects in Detroit, Newark, and New York City.



(Photo by Stuart Winecoff)

Michaela Angela Davis is an image activist, writer, conversationalist, editorial director, feminist, fashionista, community servant, and CNN contributor who cares about culture, style and equality. She has advanced the image of people of color at nearly every major media outlet targeting the African American market. Davis came to her cause through her first editorial position at *Essence* magazine under the mentorship of Susan L. Taylor in 1991, where she was the magazine’s only executive fashion, beauty, and culture editor. She was the first fashion director at *Vibe*, the editor in chief of *Honey*, and a consultant for the rebrand of Black Entertainment Television (BET). Her work can be found at CNN.com, Jezebel.com, Ebony.com and HuffingtonPost.com. She has appeared on MSNBC, Fox, MTV, VH1, BBC, NBC, and ABC.



Cheryl Finley, Ph.D. is the 2015-2016 Richard Cohen Fellow at Harvard University’s Hutchins Center. Trained in the History of Art and African American Studies at Yale University, Cheryl Finley is Associate Professor and Director of Visual Studies in the Department

of the History of Art at Cornell University. Her prolific critical attention to photography has produced the co-authored publications *Teenie Harris, Photographer: An American Story*, *Harlem: A Century in Images*, and *Diaspora, Memory, Place: David Hammons, Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons, Pamela Z*, as well as numerous essays on contemporary artists. Finley’s research has been supported by an Alphonse Fletcher Sr. Fellowship, the Ford Foundation, the W.E.B. Du Bois Research Institute, the American Council of Learned Societies, and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Her interdisciplinary project, *Re-Imagining the Grand Tour: Routes of Contemporary African Diaspora Art*, examines the current global art economy, focusing on the relationship among artists, museums, biennials, and tourism.



Aurielle Marie is a queer black woman who expresses her lived experiences as a poet, teaching artist, and activist hailing from Atlanta, GA. She is a Young People For (YP4) fellowship alumnus and the creator of the first ever poet laureate program for high schools in her hometown. She has toured the country since 2012 facilitating workshops and safe spaces that utilize hip-hop and creative writing as a vehicle for radical pro-blackness in ideology and in

practice. It is this belief that lead her to send her number out through a tweet, calling young people and young black artists to stand their ground in the wake of Michael Brown’s execution and the Ferguson Uprising. #ItsBiggerThanYou is best known as the social media campaign-turned-grassroots organization that completely shifted the lexicon of possibility for organizing young black folks in the south. As the founder of #ItsBiggerThanYou, Aurielle helped create a globally renowned organization committed to anti-state violence through radical non-violent resistance, community sustainability programs, and social campaigns specifically utilizing a radically pro-black lens. She was celebrated as one of *Creative Loafing’s* 20 People to Watch for 2015, and was also recognized as one of only four social activists in the Best of Atlanta 2015 list. She currently is a content contributor for Black Catalyst, and a poet featured in *Scallywag Southern Magazine*. She’s been featured on CNN, HBO, on film, and a global host of stages.



Born with an artist’s soul and spirit, **Bree Newsome** has always been sensitive to the essential role that art and symbols play in shaping culture and consciousness. As she watched the funeral of Rev. Clementa Pinckney, one of 9 people slaughtered in the name of white supremacy at Mother Emmanuel Church in Charleston, SC, she recognized the message being communicated clearly by the US flag and the SC state flag at halfmast while the

Confederate flag remained fully furled. Refusing to accept the premise of this image—that white supremacy is supreme, untouchable and invincible—she scaled the 30ft flagpole in front of the statehouse and removed the “stars and bars” declaring, “This flag comes down today!” Bree’s intention was to create a new image, a new symbol and a new consciousness of the power inherent in direct action. The iconic picture of her on the pole, flag in hand has become a touchstone of empowerment for disenfranchised people around the world. A

graduate of NYU’s Tisch School of the Arts, Bree is an award-winning filmmaker (“WAKE”), writer, composer, singer, community activist and organizer but she does not see these as separate endeavors. “Art is activism and activism is art,” she insists, as she seamlessly blends her talents in pursuit of social and economic justice. Currently, she works as a western field organizer for IgniteNC, a project of the Southern Vision Alliance and is a founding member of Tribe, a grassroots organizing collective dedicated to empowering underserved communities in Charlotte, NC. She has an unwavering belief in the power of the individual to make a difference and the utter inability of hate, injustice and inequality to survive the tidal wave that can be created by the collaboration and united action of individuals and groups committed to creating a better world.



(Photo by Scheherazade Tillet)

Salamishah Tillet, Ph.D. is an associate professor of English and Africana Studies at the University of Pennsylvania. She received her Ph.D. in the History of American Civilization and M.A. in English and American Literature from Harvard University; her Masters in the Art of Teaching from Brown University; and her Bachelors of Arts in English and Afro-American Studies from the University of Pennsylvania. She is the author of *Sites of Slavery: Citizenship and Racial Democracy in the Post-Civil Rights Imagination* (Duke, 2012) and is currently working on a book on the civil rights icon, Nina Simone. She regularly appears on MSNBC and has written for *The Atlantic*, *The Chicago Tribune*, *The Guardian*, *The Nation*, *The New York Times*, *The Root*, and *Time*. In 2003, Salamishah and her sister, Scheherazade Tillet, co-founded A Long Walk Home, Inc., a non-profit that uses art to end violence against girls and women. Salamishah has been nominated as “Women of the Year: Reader’s Choice” by Glamour Magazine, named one of the “Top 50 Global Leaders Ending Violence Against Children” by the Together for Girls’ *Safe* magazine, and America’s “Top Leaders Under 30” by *Ebony*.



(Photo by Jennifer Samuel)

Deborah Willis, Ph.D. is University Professor and Chair of the Department of Photography & Imaging at the Tisch School of the Arts at New York University and has an affiliated appointment with the College of Arts and Sciences, Department of Social & Cultural Analysis, Africana Studies, where she teaches courses on photography and imaging, iconicity, and cultural histories visualizing the black body, women, and gender. Her research examines photography’s multifaceted histories, visual culture, the photographic history of Slavery and Emancipation; contemporary women photographers and beauty. She received the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Fellowship and was a Richard D. Cohen Fellow in African and African American Art, Hutchins Center, Harvard University and a John Simon Guggenheim Fellow. Professor Willis received the NAACP Image Award in 2014 for her co-authored book (with Barbara Krauthamer) *Envisioning Emancipation*. Other notable projects include *The Black Female Body: A Photographic History*, *Reflections in Black: A History of Black Photographers - 1840 to the Present*, *Posing Beauty: African American Images from the 1890s to the Present*, *Michelle Obama: The First Lady in Photographs*, a NAACP Image Award Literature Winner.