Dr. Kwakiutl Dreher is an Associate Professor in the English Department at the University of Nebraska. Using a Senior Summer Research Fellowship for the summer of 2015, provided by the University of South Carolina’s Institute for African American Research, Dreher continued work on a creative writing project tentatively titled *Widow’s Row*. This project relates to a row of houses in Columbia, South Carolina assigned this nomenclature in the 1990s after all of the men living on this block had died, leaving behind a row of widows. Dreher conducted research concerning these widowed homes, with the bulk coming from oral histories collected from residents and/or their children.

Dreher positions her project alongside numerous works of popular culture in the last few years which address problems of slavery, race, and segregation. For Dreher these works, though advantageous, focus on antebellum slavery and the civil rights movement to the detriment of those studying and providing artistic contours to the post-civil rights era.

*Widow’s Row* is set during the 1970s in Burton Heights, an all-black neighborhood in Columbia settled by African American families, including Dreher’s, during the segregated 1950s. Within her work, Dreher analyzes this often overlooked African American middle class, which helps to reveal the extent to which African Americans were able to access the fruits of the civil rights movement. The 1970s was the crucial time when many believed that the civil rights movement successfully paved the way for African Americans to enjoy the socio-cultural, historical, and political fruits of that movement. School busing integrated K-12 as well as colleges and universities across the state; a new batch of African American politicians assumed their place in the South Carolina legislature; and as the ‘white only’ signs came down, retail stores, restaurants, and other businesses opened their doors to African Americans.

Integration, however, brought devastation to the African American woman entrepreneur. Dreher’s research within Columbia phone books uncovered how integration delivered a deathblow to the African American seamstress after African American women were allowed not only to enter in but to try on clothes in former ‘white only’ retail/department stores. Seamstresses had leaned on craftsmanship to nurture an identity within their own communities; the community of women, in turn, honored them by allowing them to design clothing specific for their body type. The final product rendered to each customer a one-of-a-kind wardrobe; so, each piece sewed made a woman special. Integration forced these dressmakers to put the Singer sewing machine in storage. In her anticipated monograph *Widow’s Row*, Dreher hopes to portray how the African American female entrepreneur (re)negotiated her identity once the Singer was put away.

---

Dr. Kwakiutl Dreher’s lecture, “The Activity of Research: The Embers within a Black Community” will be held on April 13, 2016 at 7:00 PM in Gambrell Hall, Room 431.
The IAAR will help sponsor an extended visit from the International Comic Arts Forum Conference 2016 keynote speaker, Dr. Michael Chaney. Chaney is chair of African and African American Studies at Dartmouth College and editor of Graphic Subjects: Critical Essays on Autobiography and Graphic Novels. While on campus, Dr. Chaney will meet with faculty interested in African American research, visit classes, and give a talk about his work on the enslaved artisan Dave the Potter that derives from to his forthcoming book, I Wonder Where Is All My Relation: Diaspora, Materiality, and the Poetics of Dave the Potter. Key to this analysis is an exploration of the public outcry that some comics generated. Frequently, parents, librarians, and legislators argued that these stories contested traditional authority figures and the status quo of American society.

Professor Qiana Whitted, a member of IAAR’s Advisory Board, was awarded one of the 2010-2011 IAAR fellowships as a faculty member. Her research examined comics from the 1950s in order to expand our understanding of how issues of segregation and racial prejudice were challenged in post-World War II American popular culture. The research on race, history, and graphic novels that Whitted completed has contributed to classroom resources as well as two articles on “Comics and Emmett Till” and “Comics and the ‘Good Kind of Trouble’ in The Montgomery Story and the March Trilogy” along with a forthcoming book under contract with Rutgers University Press. The grant supported trips to archives at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in New York and the Library of Congress.

Qiana Whitted, Associate Professor of English and African American Studies, published two articles: “Black Culture, Speculative Fiction, and the Past as Text in Jeremy Love’s Bayou,” in Essays on Teaching With Graphic Narratives and “The Blues Tragicomic: Constructing the Black Folk Subject in McCulloch and Hendrix’s Stagger Lee,” in The Blacker The Ink: Constructions of Black Identity in Comics and Sequential Art. She also presented a paper in Sweden at Stockholm University’s “Future in Comics” Conference about “Race and the Failed Futures of EC Comics.” Professor Qiana Whitted has also been awarded a Visiting Scholars Grant from the Office of the Provost to help support the upcoming International Comic Arts Forum Conference (ICAF), April 14-16, 2016 at the University of South Carolina in Columbia. ICAF is an annual academic conference for scholars who study comics, graphic novels, and other forms of sequential art. Programming also highlight the diversity of representation in comics with scholarly papers that explore the creative advances of marginalized voices, prompting the question: how can a form that is so well known for caricature be repurposed to tell more complex stories about difference? Guest artists Keith Knight (The K Chronicles), Howard Cruse (Stuck Rubber Baby), Cece Bell (El Deafo), Dominique Goblet (Faire semblant c’est mentir); Sanford Greene (Power Man & Iron Fist, Runaways) and writer Roy Thomas (former Marvel editor-in-chief) will anchor the conference proceedings with first-hand accounts of their work and experience in comics. All events at ICAF 2016 are free and open to the public.
Publications, Presentations & Awards


**Catherine Keyser** has published “Bottles, Bubbles, and Blood: Jean Toomer and the Limits of Racial Epideralism,” in *Modernism/ Modernity,* April 2015.

**Brent Morris** was named one of USC’s 12 Breakthrough Stars in research and scholarships by the Office of Research for 2016. He presented a paper entitled “Dismal Freedom: Self-Emancipation, Marronage, and the Resistance Communities of the Great Dismal Swamp” as part of a distinguished panel titled “Swamp” as part of a distinguished panel titled “Resistance Communities of the Great Dismal Swan.”


**Sueanna Smith** was named 2015-2016 short term fellow at the American Antiquarian Society and the Massachusetts Historical Society and gave a talk on early African American freemasons and material culture at each institution. She was awarded a Love of Learning Award from Phi Kappa Phi.


**Andrew Kettler** was granted the University of South Carolina, John A. and Anne Rice Award for Excellence, August 2015. He was also awarded a Walter Edgar History Scholarship from the Columbia Committee of the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America in the State of South Carolina, March 2105.

**Jennifer Taylor** was accepted by the Yale Public History Institute hosted by the Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance, and Abolition (2015). She also presented at National Council on Public History panel The National Park Service: Hedging and Edging Around Inclusivity: “Reconstruction History on the Edge: The Failed Attempt to Construct a Reconstruction National Park Service Site in Beaufort, South Carolina” (April 2015).


**IAAR 2016-2017 Fellowship Application Announcement**

The Institute for African American Research is proud to announce the 2016-2017 IAAR research fellowship. These competitive awards support projects in any area of African American research and primarily focus on encouraging research and creative activities to generate projects that will enter the mainstream, raise public awareness and have the potential to secure additional funding for extended study. These grants emphasize interdisciplinary research, seek to encourage development of traditional grant applications, and work to promote scholarly interchange.

USC faculty and graduate students on all campuses are eligible to apply for one of the limited number of available fellowships. The awards for faculty will be $2,500 and $1,500 for graduate students. The deadline to submit grant proposals is April 1, 2016 at 11:59PM with awards being announced by May 6, 2016.

Grant proposals and questions may be emailed to Lindsay Arave at Arave@mailbox.sc.edu. For more information please visit our website.
The central mission of the Institute for African American Research (IAAR) is to encourage the scholarly study and public understanding of race and black life, principally in the United States, the South, and South Carolina, but also throughout the African Diaspora and the world. We will pursue our mission as an interdisciplinary and collaborative center for research focused on people of African descent in the South and beyond. The IAAR operates under the guidance of an advisory board with representatives from departments across the university's campus.

Visit us on the web and join our ListServ at www.cas.sc.edu/iaar
On Facebook at www.facebook.com/IAARUSC
Or On Twitter at www.twitter.com/IAARUSC